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DESTINED TO SURVIVE
CONDEMNED TO REMEMBER

by
Max Wagner

in collaboration with
Dianne W. Sigman

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
Acknowledgments	3
Dedication	7
Introduction	8
Childhood	9
Into Exile	26
Military Career	39
Under Russian Occupation	46
Under German Occupation	52
Life In The Ghetto	60
Deportation	68
Labor Camp	76
Family Reunion	88
Return to Czernowitz	92
Return to Germany	109
Life in America	118
Married Life	136
Epilogue	156
Glossary	160
Photographs	161
Documents	178

Acknowledgments

Long before I arrived in the United States, I committed myself to my future. I decided to focus all my attention on the years ahead and leave the horrors of the past behind. I envisioned my arrival in America as a new awakening. As much as I wanted to control my thoughts, I found that, although I was able to concentrate on the positive aspects of life during the day, my nights were haunted by the ghosts of my past. I often awakened, screaming with nightmares. At times I was certain that I could smell the scent of German and Russian military uniforms. My cries would wake my wife, Miriam, who would comfort and console me until I could go back to sleep.

It was Miriam who finally persuaded me, in the early 1980's, to write about my experiences. She convinced me of my obligation to leave my legacy for future generations. For Miriam's guidance, support and encouragement, I am eternally grateful.

This book would never have been written without the dedication and hard work of my collaborator and daughter, Dianne W. Sigman. Through her probing questions I was able to reconstruct my feelings and experiences, involving the reader on a personal level. The hundreds of hours we spent together in sharing my experiences and committing them to paper were punctuated by tears, hugs, and a deep emotional bonding which was strengthened as this project evolved. To Dianne I offer my deepest gratitude.

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consultant, working diligently to overcome the technical difficulties associated with this project.

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Thank you to my son-in-law, Gary Sigman, for inputting the final corrections, researching and designing the geographical maps, and for formatting the last draft into the computer.

Of particular note is the design on the cover of this book. It was created by my artist daughter, Jacki Routhenstein, in memory of my late sister Inge, for whom Jacki was named. It is a depiction of the drawstring bag which Inge took with her to the camp. It holds the yellow star which she was forced to wear. Jacki is also

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Finally, I thank all of my friends and extended family, too many to name, who supported and encouraged me to complete this book.

Dedication

I dedicate this book to my grandchildren, Joshua and Ariella Sigman and Barak, Arik and Esti Routhenstein and all future generations. May they forgive, but not forget.

Introduction

This is a story of personal suffering, tragedy and bitter-sweet victory. More than 60 years have passed since my family and I fled Nazi Germany. It was an odyssey of over sixteen years during which we encountered many life threatening experiences as well as many miracles. We were the lucky ones; we survived. As a survivor, I consider it my obligation to give my children, their children, and others a first-hand account of that period as I lived through it.

My goal, as I write this book, is to convey not just the events that happened to me, but also the sensations of inner desperation, grief, terror and hopelessness and the enduring hope. If my words are to fulfill their purpose as an eye witness account, they will be a legacy for all future generations.

That period of my life seems so far away that, occasionally, I find it difficult to believe I was the one living through those times. Many of the dates, times and places are burned into my memory as if they were etched in stone; others have faded. I cannot claim completeness or objectivity; rather I present the reader with the stages of my journey to the best of my recollection.

Childhood

Like paintings in a picture gallery, various scenes of our family life in Berlin pass through my memory. During my early childhood years, we moved twice and then finally my parents bought a beautiful house in Berlin; spacious rooms surrounded by lovely gardens and trees that became my home. Even today, years and several lifetimes later, I do not find it at all difficult to visualize details about each room: a magnificent black Bechstein piano dominates our music room; a large Tabriz Persian rug covers the center of the floor of our dining room with little Persian prayer rugs spread out all over the rest of the floor; gold colored moldings from ceiling to floor frame the large wall on both sides of the credenza; a tapestry, or *Gobelain*, with a hunting scene motif beautifies the sitting room. I was so fascinated by this great work of art that I would recognize it anywhere today. The entire setting reflected the warmth and elegance of our unusually informal life by the Berlin standards of seventy years ago.

Above all, I remember each family member; my mother sitting at the piano, playing and singing for us; my father appearing suddenly, loaded with presents for us on <u>his</u> birthday, his way of rewarding us for the happiness he felt as our father.

In my mind's eye, the picture changes again, and now I see Frieda Schwevel, taking care of us while Mama and Papa are away on a trip. Frieda was short, solid, warm-hearted and loving. As our housekeeper, she came every day to clean and cook for our family, taking care of all of our needs. Her husband was a violinist who played operettas and salon music in a small orchestra.

I hear my brother Marcel practicing piano with Frieda's husband, accompanying him on the violin; playing segments of the overture to "*Si J'etais Roi*", this joyous piece of music called "If I Were King" filled my ears then and now. I see myself with eyes closed, daydreaming of the time when Marcel would accompany me as I played the violin. Jacques, my older brother who is halfway between Marcel and me in age, joins in playing four hand piano with Mutti (mother) or Marcel. My sister Inge, the youngest, sits on the floor by the piano playing with her dolls.

It always seemed to me that we were a special collection of people, even as children. My oldest sibling, Marcel, was born on September 30,1912. A very bright boy, he was able to understand difficult concepts and memorize music on a level well beyond that expected for his age. When Mutti had her weekly piano lessons, Marcel stood by and watched. As soon as the teacher left, Marcel would go to the piano and figure out the same melodies that Mutti had learned.

When Marcel was eight years old, Mama decided that it was time for him to begin formal instruction in music. After a few years of lessons twice each week, Marcel progressed so rapidly that the teacher recommended that he be enrolled in the music conservatory. Following this recommendation, Marcel began to study at the Stern Conservatory of Music in Berlin. There he was privileged to study under two of the finest music professors in Germany, Claudio Arrau and Frederic Lamond. Professor Lamond had been a student of Franz Liszt and was considered one of the foremost interpreters of Liszt and Beethoven. At the age of seventeen, Marcel was invited to audition for Lamond. He did so well that he was accepted as a student in the Master Class, and the inner circle of Lamond's students. This elite group came from all across Europe. Marcel's recitals were so well received, that they provided him with the impetus to proceed into a musical career.

Jacques, the second child, was born on March 25,1914. At first, Jacques was a very delicate and frail baby. He developed into a gentle, soft and kind child. In school, Jacques was a good student and an eager learner. He also showed great interest in music. Following in Marcel's footsteps, he entered into the Stern Conservatory to study piano. Although he was two years older than I was, I always felt comfortable speaking to him about my deepest, most private thoughts and concerns. We often confided in each other about our friends, especially girls.

I was born in 1916, the third of my parents' four children and the last boy. The first three years of my life were filled with the privileges bestowed upon the youngest, the "baby" in any family. As my mother described me to myself long ago, I was a quiet child and seldom awoke during the night. My early school years were uneventful, probably because I was never fully awake for the first hour in the classroom.

Ingeborg graced our family on July 3, 1919. The long awaited girl, she immediately became the center of attention. Jacques and I often played with her, anxious to give her all the advantages of our brotherly love, and later, of our advice. Inge became a caring, sweet little girl. After completing elementary school, she entered into a Lyceum (secondary school) for girls. She rounded out her education with private piano lessons, later joining the rest of us at the Stern Conservatory for Music. Inge loved playing the piano as a soloist, or four-handed with Mutti.

Our interest in music was inspired primarily by Mutti. We were surrounded by music almost from birth. Mutti inherited her beautiful voice from her mother, who, in her younger years, was offered a scholarship for a singing career in Vienna. Her parents, the Holdengraebers, however, were very religious Jews, who would not permit my grandmother, Anna Rosner, to leave home to study music. Mutti sang everything from children's songs to arias from popular operettas. All this musical activity created a happy home atmosphere.

Mutti set the tone from the beginning of the day. She woke us up each morning, walking from room to room, singing happy melodies. My favorite was the song about a family of birds who were marrying off their daughter. The mother of the bride, an owl, did not wish to let go of her daughter. It was a charming melody, enhanced with lovely words, called Feederalala, Feederalala. That upbeat attitude, gave us a positive start which usually lasted through the whole day. Throughout the years, this song has stayed with me, and I can still be found singing it to my children and grandchildren, to rave reviews and calls for "encore!".

Mutti was an incredibly beautiful woman. When she went shopping, accompanied by the four of us, strangers would come up to her complimenting her beauty and amazed that all four of us belonged to her. Despite her beauty and wealth, Mutti dressed very modestly. She usually wore a tailored suit and minimal jewelry.

Watching Mutti and her teacher playing four-handed music together, Marcel, Jacques and Inge were drawn to the piano. I became interested in the violin when my parents took me to a concert at the age of ten. I was inspired when I heard the young violinist Yehudi Menuhin playing the Mendelsohn violin concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. I later learned that Albert Einstein attended the same concert and remarked to a newspaper critic that "*Yehudi*

Menuhin ist ein Wunderkind" (Yehudi Menuhin is a child prodigy). The only thing that I had in common with Yehudi Menuhin was my age.

When I asked my parents for violin lessons, they happily agreed. Unfortunately, shortly after the concert I developed acute appendicitis. I had been complaining of severe abdominal pains earlier in the day. Mutti called the family doctor that evening. When he came to the house and examined me, he told my parents to take me to the private clinic for surgery. (At that time in Berlin, hospitals were meant for indigent patients. Wealthy people were treated in private clinics.) I can still remember the name of the surgeon who operated on me, Dr. Braun. I recall how the attendants put a mask over my face, and I can still smell the ether. I was told to count and the next thing I knew, the surgery was over, and I was awake. When I opened my eyes the next morning, I saw my parents standing at my bedside. As I turned to my side, there was a violin lying on the pillow next to me. I was extremely excited, visualizing myself on the stage of a large concert hall performing in front of an enormous audience. What a wonderful dream to keep me occupied while I was lying strapped into my bed, immobilized for three weeks!

That was the beginning of my great love affair with my violin. I was eleven years old when Mother enrolled me in the Stern Conservatory of Music in Berlin. As I walked into the Conservatory, I could feel pride seep through the handle of the violin case in my right hand and fill my whole being. I was to become an active

part of the musical world! My first teacher in elementary class was Frau Engels. Her class provided me with a solid background from which I could build my future career.

In 1932, I asked to audition for Professor Petschnikoff (*oberklasse*), the professor of the upper of five levels of music education offered at the Conservatory. The audition was very difficult. I had to play for one of his students before I even was permitted to audition for him. My training and effort were rewarded when I was accepted into his class. Upon graduation from the Conservatory, I studied under Maxim Jacobson, a well-known teacher who not only taught at the Stern Conservatory, but also had a private music school which specialized in teaching violin. At the Conservatory, Professor Jacobson instituted an innovative approach to music education. Each student played for the others. Afterwards, we all critiqued the performances, under Professor Jacobson's guidance. In this way, each of us benefited from the critique of our peers and learned how to listen to another's performance with a critical ear.

As much as we enjoyed our music studies, we looked forward to our vacations in various mountain resorts. Our favorite destinations were the Hartz Mountains and Bad Reichenhall In Thueringen, Germany. There we hiked along breathtakingly beautiful mountain trails, made famous in the poetry of Heinrich Heine.

Our most memorable vacation was the trip we took to Romania to visit Mutti's and Papa's families. I was about fifteen years old when this journey took us from Berlin to Romania by way of Czechoslovakia. Our first stop was the historic city of Prague. In this beautiful city, Papa took us to see many of the ancient sites, with emphasis on those in the Jewish section. Entering the famous Alt-Neu Shul of Rabbi Loew in this section of the city made a lasting impression on me. As we descended through the main entrance down into the synagogue, I was captivated by the mysticism surrounding the legend of the Praguer Golem.

According to this legend, in the late eighteenth century, Rabbi Loew created a huge human-like figure out of clay in response to the vengeful anti-Semitic accusations from the local population that Jews were committing ritual murders. These false rumors incited the Czech people to attack innocent Jewish victims, kill them and destroy their homes. The Golem was a monster created to take revenge against the attackers. Rabbi Loew instructed the Golem to walk through the streets, destroying all those who had killed Jews. The Golem may have been the first legendary superhero. The legend continues that after some time, the Golem's killing rampage took on such proportions, that Rabbi Loew had to destroy the Golem by returning him to dust to stop him from killing innocent victims.

After leaving Prague, we took a train through the Carpathian Mountains to a city called Kosice (Kaschau). As we left the train station to take a horse-drawn

carriage, we were surrounded by Jewish beggars. Papa emptied his pockets of all of his cash into the hands of the unfortunate needy. He was surrounded by so many beggars, that we practically had to pull him back into the carriage to rescue him. We continued on to our destination, accompanying Papa on his visit to a Yeshiva, a favorite project of his which he had been supporting for a long time. There we were warmly received, visiting the classrooms and meeting with the Rabbis in charge.

We traveled from there to a small town called Poljana. A famous Rabbi who was very sick and poor lived in this town. The driver took us directly to his home. I will never forget this image. The Rabbi lived in a very modest room at the back of a small synagogue in the middle of the village. Although a very young man, he was extremely frail, almost ghost-like in appearance. Papa wanted to help the Rabbi, but the Rabbi refused any personal financial support. Not knowing how else to show his concern and respect, Papa decided to make a generous donation to the synagogue, stipulating that the Rabbi's medical needs were to be met first with this money.

As we were getting ready to leave, this small fragile Rabbi held his cold, trembling, bony hands over our heads and blessed us with the traditional priestly blessing. We were so deeply moved, we had difficulty pulling ourselves away from his presence to continue our trip.

From there we went to visit our families in the Bukovina by way of Sighet Marmaros, a picturesque town in Transylvania. We met Papa's family in Czernowitz and Radautz. This was my first introduction to my grandmother, Papa's mother, Chana Wagner. She was a very tall and impressive looking woman with a gentle personality and a warm heart. As soon as she saw us, she immediately embraced all of her grandchildren, showering us with hugs and kisses. We also met, for the first time, Papa's oldest brother, Uncle Erich and his two sisters, *Tante* Shifra, *Tante* Rose, and their children. Uncle Herman, who had visited with us in Berlin on many occasions, was also there. The reunion was warm and exciting. We were immediately surrounded by their love. By this time, all of Mutti's family who were not living in Berlin had already moved to the United States, so this was our only family in Europe. What a wonderful experience to meet them all and feel the strength of our family ties!

Papa later told me that on that visit, he deposited 1 million *lei* (Romanian currency) to be used as needed by the family under the supervision of Uncle Herman. I believe that this trip left such a lasting mark on my life because it was the first time that I realized what a generous and charitable man my father was. Until this trip, I knew he sent money to needy causes and I had seen him help those who came to our door asking for money, but never before had I seen Papa go out of his way, out of our country, to help so many people.

Map relates to text pages 16 – 18.

When we weren't traveling, our home was always open to visitors. My parents strongly believed in Tikun Olam, the Jewish concept of repairing the world. Not only was this apparent in their magnanimous deeds, such as those described above, but also in everyday acts of kindness. Since my earliest childhood, I can remember strangers at our table for all major Jewish Holidays. My parents opened their homes and their hearts to many people, generally religious Jews from the East, who had come to find their fortunes in Berlin. I never knew how Papa found these lonely strangers until one day, when I was a teenager, Papa invited me to accompany him to the Jewish section of Berlin known as *Grenadierstrasse*. It was *Erev Pesach*, and I remember driving into this neighborhood in a taxi sitting next to Papa, who asked the taxi driver to stop in front of a small synagogue. After Papa got out of the car, he asked me to wait for him. I watched as he went from one building to another, asking if there was anyone who didn't have a place to go for the holiday. Before long, Papa appeared with two young men from Poland. Papa was elated to have the opportunity to perform another mitzvah, and the men appeared to be equally thrilled to be part of a family celebration of the holiday.

When we returned home, Mutti and the rest of the family were anxiously awaiting our arrival. The table was set with our finest china, white with a border of cobalt blue and gold. It was laden with the best efforts of our talented cook, Frieda Schwefel, who worked her "magic" under the direction of Mutti.

Papa's heart also went out to refugees who fled the Russian Revolution. He was instrumental in helping many of them to get employment, and to relocate to new countries. I can still remember the names of two Russian Jewish families who fled from Russia to Berlin, the Hertzogs and the Rifkins. My family literally adopted them. They lived with us for several months and even came with us on vacation. Later, Papa assisted the Hertzog in settling in Argentina, and the Rifkins in settling in Paris.

Family members, of course, were always welcome in our home as well. The most frequent visitors were my father's Uncle Yaakov Solomon, his wife Netti, and their children Fabian, Max and Sida. We saw them almost every weekend, especially because they seemed truly to enjoy our impromptu musical "performances," many of which were nothing more than practice sessions. We all had a great time. They loved listening to us, and we loved having the audience.

Then came the Rennerts, very special friends of my parents, with their daughter Susie, a delightful little girl with a bubbly personality. What an interesting family they were! Mr. Rennert was highly educated but had little luck financially. Papa encouraged Mr. Rennert to make use of our extensive library of Jewish books. I frequently found him there, deeply engrossed in the study of a Jewish text. Several times a month, the Rennerts would join us for dinner, staying late into the evening.

Mutti's mother Anna's second husband, Nathan Rath, was another frequent visitor. He was quite an enterprising person. A homeopath and an inventor, he was especially proud of his inventions to ease suffering. He developed a cold water treatment to reduce pain in his patients and an assortment of other treatments using electricity. His demonstrations were very impressive.

Anna often visited us even when Nathan was unable to accompany her. She frequently stayed for extended periods of time, her visits becoming more frequent after Grandfather's death. We loved her dearly and, as a sign of our affection, we called her "Mama".

By far, the most entertaining visitor was my mother's brother, Uncle Adolph, a very talented and cheerful person. As soon as he walked into our home, he went to the piano and started playing the latest tunes, using only the black keys. He couldn't read a single note of music, yet the tunes were instantly recognizable. Occasionally he brought a lovely young lady with him, presumably looking for my mother's approval.

Another frequent visitor was mother's sister, *Tante* Ellen. She married Herman Metzler, a Christian who converted to Judaism, a warm, charming person who was very much in love with *Tante* Ellen. Uncle Herman and *Tante* Ellen often joined us on vacations to the mountains.

One of my favorite, albeit rare, guests was the world-known tenor Joseph Schmid, a cousin on my father's side. Joseph toured with the Berlin Opera Company. He was often compared to the famous Italian tenor Benjamino Gigli, and starred in seven films produced in Germany by U.F.A. When his schedule permitted, Joseph Schmid joined us on the High Holidays. Often during his visits my brother Marcel accompanied him on the piano, while Joseph treated us to a private performance.

Frequently, fellow students from the Stern Conservatory of Music also came to visit us. One student in particular stands out , a young man named Lowenberg, who studied opera. As a baritone, he had a rich deep voice which I loved to hear. Instrumental musicians also came. The sound of all of us practicing chamber music in an ensemble still lingers. I must admit that we sounded very good.

Our lives were filled with schoolwork, musical education and other activities. We were very fortunate that Papa was successful, and this allowed us to live a very comfortable life. On many occasions when the time between the ending of the school day and the lessons at the Conservatory was too close, our chauffeur, Grothe, picked us up at school and drove us to the Conservatory. Of course, we took all of these luxuries and conveniences for granted. How foolish we were!!

Papa was a prominent, well-respected member of the Jewish community of Berlin. We observed a traditional Jewish life because of Papa's commitment to the continuation of our heritage. In addition to holiday observance, we went to Synagogue on most Sabbaths, Mutti ushered in the *Shabbat* with the traditional candle lighting. After Papa recited the *Kiddush* and *Motzi*, we sat down to a traditional Sabbath family dinner.

My father also was one of the leading entrepreneurs and charitable citizens of Berlin. I remember his office was decorated with framed letters from the *Oberbuergermeister* (Mayor) of Berlin as well as numerous letters from charitable organizations, all expressing gratitude for his humanitarian acts of relief to the less fortunate. Nevertheless, in spite of my father's great financial successes, he tried to keep a low profile. We were always aware that as Jews, we were at best only tolerated by the Germans.

Papa earned his success on his own merit. When he came to Berlin from Koenigsberg in 1904, he was only seventeen years old and was filled with great hopes and limitless ambition. His first job was in a tobacco shop, hand-rolling cigarettes. After a short while, with his enterprising mind and driving determination, he acquired a pushcart and sold his own hand-rolled cigarettes and related items such as cigars and tobacco while pushing the cart through various business districts of Berlin. From these humble beginnings, he soon traded his pushcart for a retail store and, in time, became the leading wholesaler-

distributor- retailer for domestic and foreign tobacco products in Berlin. Before he was thirty years old, he owned twenty-one retail stores and a wholesale warehouse on Behrenstrasse 27. He also became a partner in the *Bankhause* of Eugen Bab and Company and a co-owner of all the money exchange booths (*Wechselstuben*) in Berlin's railroad stations. Through his banking business, Papa became very involved with the stock markets in Berlin, New York and Montreal. Later, as I was growing up, I remember Papa mentioning names like Chrysler and Ford, in which he owned substantial shares of stock.

Mutti worked with Papa, exercising a degree of control over Papa's more risky business ventures. Together they developed a nearly foolproof check and balance system for Papa's investments. Papa always consulted with Mutti before investing, and it was not unheard of for her to hold him back at times. Although the final decision was always Papa's, he valued Mutti's opinion and took her advice.

Mutti helped Papa in his business until Marcel's birth. She then focused her attention on her maternal obligations, devoting her time and energy to raising us and running a Jewish household. During this period, the domestic and foreign tobacco industry took notice of my father's business success and approached him to take over the distribution of all major brands for Berlin.

Papa's personal life was as successful as his financial ventures. We loved to hear Papa tell the story of how, in the year 1911, he met Mutti. He was 24 years old, very handsome, tall and well groomed. One beautiful summer day, as he was walking home, in front of him he saw a lovely girl strolling down the street with her mother. He followed them from a distance, until they finally entered an apartment house.

By coincidence, a friend of Papa's lived in the same building. Papa and his friend immediately did some detective work and located Mutti's apartment. A little bit of a Don Juan and certainly not lacking in self confidence, Papa, as he confessed, one day knocked at the door of the mother and daughter whom he had seen on the street only a few days before. This was the first time that Papa met Mutti, face to face. She was beautiful, very young and shy. He said that he visited her very frequently, showered her with gifts, and finally proposed. My grandmother later told me that Papa was very charming. After only a few months of knowing him, she and my grandfather agreed to the marriage. The wedding took place on December 28, 1911 when my mother was only 16 1/2 years old. My parents had a mutual loving relationship, not only in times of crisis, but during their best times of life. I can scarcely remember relations between my parents ever being seriously strained. Conflicts were rare and never lasting. If there is love after life, I'm convinced that their love affair is continuing in heaven.

Into Exile

In 1933, when I was seventeen years old, life changed dramatically. On April first, Hitler, who by that time had become the Reichskantzler (government leader) of Germany, declared a nationwide boycott against the Jews. The S. A. (Brownshirts) were the official enforcers of this boycott. They went through the streets, marking all Jewish-owned business with slogans such as "Don't buy from Jews". Many stores were looted, and anyone they thought "looked Jewish" was beaten and taken away, usually not to be heard from again. These actions sent shock waves through the Jewish community, although who could anticipate its conclusion? This was the beginning of the campaign of violence and dehumanization of the Jews by Hitler and his cohorts that ended in the gas chambers and mass graves.

As I mentioned earlier, my father was a partner in the Bank of Eugen Bab and Company. The firm had two additional partners: a German Jew named Eugen Bab and a German Christian named D'Avance. After the incident on April 1, 1933, Papa entrusted D'Avance with many of his valuables, with the understanding that they would be returned to him upon demand. These valuables included jewelry and an extensive collection of gold coins. Because of their close business relationship, Papa had no doubts about his partner's trustworthiness.

One evening, in the fall of 1936, Mr. D'Avance called my father with an urgent message to meet him at once. Uncle Herman, my father's younger brother, was visiting with us from Romania at that time. D'Avance requested to speak to my father in private, but Papa insisted on having Mutti and Uncle Herman present. After D'Avance left, we all went into the room where the meeting had taken place. Papa's ashen face terrified us. Mutti and Uncle Herman were standing by his side, with similar fear in their expressions. Papa turned to us and uttered only a few fateful words which continue to ring in my ears: "Children, each of you pack your absolute necessities into a small suitcase because we must leave Germany at once." This sudden decision by Papa and Mutti left us stunned. We felt many conflicting emotions: fear, anger and bewilderment among them. At the same time, we had complete confidence in my parents and shared an unwavering belief that this must be the best decision even though we were unaware of what had immediately precipitated it.

The assault by the Nazis against the Jews was finally affecting us on a direct personal level. We felt abandoned, homeless, without family or friends. The comfort and security we always took for granted was gone. We were leaving behind everything meaningful to us. For Papa, it was the loss of a lifetime of labor.

My father's announcement evoked tremendous pressure. How do we choose what to take? What constitutes absolute necessities? I packed some clothing, pictures and, of course, my beloved violin.

About two hours later, we all were ready to go. As we were packing, Papa had sent Grothe, our chauffeur to bring my grandmother, Uncle Adolph and his fiancee and *Tante* Ellen and her family to our home. Once packed, we were faced with a heartbreaking separation. Our relatives had come to bid us farewell. It was very difficult to say good-bye, not knowing if and when we would be reunited. Papa assured them that if they would like to join us in Romania, we would do our best to help them.

Just before leaving home, Mutti and Papa asked us to join them in Papa's office. Papa had something of great importance to tell us. He asked us to sit down. Mutti and Uncle Herman were at his side. With his usual warm, gentle voice, Papa managed a small, yet sincere smile as he told us the following story. "When I was a little boy my father took me to visit his grandparents, Chaim Wagner, the *Shotzer Ruv*, and his *Rebbetzin*. Shotz was a little town in the Bukovinia. The Romanians called it 'Suceava'. When the Ruv saw me, a little boy, he blessed me saying 'You, and your children, and your children's children will always be protected and saved by the Almighty.' We leave our home now to go into exile and we most likely will never return. But, with G-d's guidance and the blessing of the *Shotzer Ruv*, we will be all right."

It was a rainy night when we left our home and everything that had been meaningful to us. Silent and overwhelmed with sadness, we stood at the door, looking back at the house for the last time. We knew that we probably would never be back. Each of us carried only a small suitcase so as not to draw attention from the authorities. In our clothes we hid those pieces of jewelry and small valuables which we had not lost to D'Avance. We took these "just in case" we would need them to bribe our way to safety. With typical forethought which he explained later, Papa removed our brass nameplate from the front door of our home, gently placing it in his pocket. Then Papa threw the keys to our home in the nearest gutter as an act of defiance. With this gesture, Papa, who had built a prosperous, comfortable life for all of us, lost everything material that he had accumulated as a result of his hard work and skill. Yet, his proud demeanor clearly indicated to us that he believed he still had the most important things in his life: his family and hope. Papa's attitude cushioned our fear and inspired our confidence. Led by his passionate attachment to Judaism, he put his fate in G-d's hands and we put ours in Papa's.

And so began our wanderings towards an unknow future. Many years later, Uncle Herman told us what really had happened at that meeting with D'Avance. D'Avance stated he had authoritative information that the Gestapo would be coming for Papa the next morning. This disclosure clearly was intended to save our lives. Yet, when my father requested the valuables that he had entrusted to

D'Avance for safe keeping, D'Avance then announced that he had been a member of the Nazi Party for many years. With this pronouncement, D'Avance proudly displayed the membership insignia pinned under his lapel and refused to return Papa's valuables, claiming that Papa should have been grateful to him for the advanced warning of imminent danger.

Only recently, did it occur to me that my father's prominence in German society placed him in an especially perilous situation. As a successful and charitable business executive who contributed great sums of money to the German people during the Depression after World War I, Papa was a dramatic contrast to the stereotype of the greedy, evil Jew portrayed by Nazi doctrine. Therefore, he was targeted for elimination at the outset.

Thanks to my father's foresight and Uncle Herman's influence with the Romanian Consulate, Papa had prepared travel documents from the Romanian government to be used "just in case". Additionally, many years before Hitler's rise to power, my father had bought a beautiful villa in Radautz from a Romanian military officer who was transferred. The villa was situated on a street called *Obst Allee* (Avenue of the Fruits). Uncle Herman had supervised the upkeep of this villa throughout the intervening years. Therefore, on the night of our departure, Papa and Mutti decided to go to Romania, where both of them had family ties. They believed that there we would be out of Hitler's reach.

Map relates to text page 30.

Map relates to text page 30.

We went to the railroad station and boarded two different trains in order to avoid attracting much attention to ourselves. The German nationals, caught up in the frenzy of Hitler's goal to cleanse Germany, had become extremely suspicious. Any family leaving as a complete group would be at risk for arrest. My father, Marcel and Jacques boarded a train for Belgium. From there, they would travel on to Switzerland, eventually meeting up with us in Radautz, Romania. Mutti, Inge and I went with Uncle Herman to his home in Romania.

While traveling on the train, I reflected on the impact of the events of the past few hours. Not only was I reeling from the physical separation from everything I knew, but I began to suspect that my vision of a musical career would never be realized, a dream I had since I first heard Yehudi Menuhin as a small child. Still, as hours and kilometers passed, I resisted despair and clung to the hope that starting a new life in a new place would offer its own opportunities. I could hear Professor Jacobson's words of advice echo in my ears, telling me to listen carefully to every performance, because each was an opportunity to learn.

After sixteen hours of traveling through Poland, we finally arrived in Czernowitz, the capitol of the Bucovina, Romania. We were completely exhausted, physically and emotionally. There we boarded yet another train to Radautz, which had a large Jewish population. Many members of Papa's family had businesses there and were well established in the community. One cousin, Heller, was the postmaster. Another relative, named Rudich, owned a brewery. Uncle Herman owned a hardware store. I still remember how his store was filled

with long, thick metal strips used for covering the wooden wheels of the peasants' carts. Innumerable shelves were filled with an assortment of screws and hardware supplies. Most of his customers were peasants who wore colorful handmade clothing. Many times they brought Uncle Herman eggs, butter and assorted farm goods as payment for their purchases. Uncle Herman had an assistant named Hecht, who was a charming young man. With limitless patience, he tried to explain the workings of the hardware business to me. Indeed, all of our relatives tried very hard to make us feel comfortable.

Papa, Marcel and Jacques joined us in Radautz less than a month later. Since they had sent word announcing their expected arrival in Czernowitz, we were able to meet them at the train station with a taxi. The reunion was very emotional. We felt so relieved to be reunited as a family.

Settling into life in Radautz required tremendous adjustments. Remembering our life rich with cultural and material wealth in Berlin, we couldn't help but compare it to our modest day-to-day existence here. Most obvious was the difference in shopping. The contrast between the clean, modern stores in Berlin, which were open regularly with sophisticated displays of merchandise as compared with the small town, open-air market accessible only on Mondays and Thursdays, was staggering. What made shopping here even more unpleasant were the native insect populations which tended to occupy the space between the people and the merchandise. Adding to the culture shock was the cacophony of noise from

both animals and people. Everywhere we turned, we heard bargaining for prices in a foreign language and saw peasants dressed in their brightly-colored rural clothing coming to market by horse-drawn wagon.

Thus it shouldn't be hard to understand how totally overwhelmed and lost we felt in this strange new world of ours. *Tante* Sabina, Uncle Herman's wife, was an expert in negotiating for what she wanted and took Mutti under her wing, insuring that we had the basic necessities.

A few months later, when our limited funds were running low, my parents decided to sell the villa in Radautz. We moved into the house owned by my father's cousin Rachmuth, his wife Charlotte, and their two young children, Ernst and Hedwig. Rachmuth was a local judge and an incredibly gifted artist. His hobby was carving wood into intricate filigree patterns. He created magnificent castles, houses and miniature furniture, decorating them elaborately with his carvings. He even had a separate room in his house dedicated to his hobby. Rachmuth and his wife welcomed us with open arms. With time we learned to be content with our new life. A new normalcy was established, and days began to take on a routine.

One hot summer day, Jacques decided to go to the beach in a nearby town called Dorneshti, about ten kilometers away from Radautz. He told us that he had a rendezvous with some friends, and off he went by bicycle to meet them.

My parents, of course, had no objections. After all, he was twenty-two years old, no longer a child. When nightfall came and Jacques did not return, we became alarmed, overwhelmed by an ominous feeling. Since the road to Dorneshti was very dark at night, we believed that Jacques would not have been foolish enough to attempt this road by bicycle. Therefore, we were certain that something terrible must have happened to him. We notified the local police, but they refused to do anything until daylight. We received the same response from the *Gendarmeries* (similar to the state police), whose headquarters was located next door to the house in which we lived. We stayed up all night trying to support each other as our panic grew. We could hardly wait for daybreak.

The next morning, Papa, Uncle Herman and Rachmuth went with the *Gendarmeries* to Dorneshti. There they made a gruesome discovery that confirmed our worst fears. Jacques' belongings were found next to the water, but not his bicycle. After searching the water, the police retrieved my brother's body. I can hardly imagine the shock and heartbreak Papa must have felt upon seeing his dead son's body. My brother's horrible fate was a grim reminder of our tenuous situation.

This tragedy was so immense that the entire city of Radautz went into in mourning. On the day of the funeral, literally hundreds of people, strangers we never knew, joined us in the procession on foot to the cemetery. Mutti, Inge and I rode to the cemetery in a horse-drawn carriage. We were so overwhelmed with

grief that we could barely stand, let alone walk. Marcel and Papa walked behind the casket, which was in another carriage in front of the procession. Many store keepers and businessmen closed their shops as a sign of sharing our grief. My brother, Marcel, was moved to write the following poem in German as a tribute to Jacques.

In Memorium

Jacques

Dein Leben ein

fluechtiger Traum

Ruhst Du im ewigen

Friedensraum

Nie wieder seh'ich

Dich, Ach' wie das

Herz mir bricht

Erloschen bist's

in tiefer Nacht

Hast sanft

deine Augen

Zugemacht

This translates to say:

In memory of Jacques

Your life a fleeting dream

You rest in eternal peace

Never will I see you again

Oh how my heart is breaking

Your life was extinguished in the darkness of the night

And your eyes gently closed forever

The big question was, what really happened to my brother on that day? With the help of Papa's cousin, the official investigation by the police and the Gendarmeries exposed evidence of foul play. Jacques bicycle was never found. Moreover, when his body was retrieved, the police noted a large gash in his head, obviously caused by a violent blow. We didn't know who Jacques was meeting. Since most of his friends were also my friends from the Zionist organization in Radautz, we could surmise only that those who accompanied him that day were not friends of long standing. We all concluded that Jacques had been brutally murdered. Jacques' death was all the more unsettling because it was so sudden and inexplicable.

In time, music and romance brought consolation. During our stay in Radautz, Marcel and I received great acclaim for our performances in a number of musical recitals. At one of these recitals that I noticed a beautiful woman with

golden hair and a charming personality. Her name was Renate Tepperberg. She was eighteen years old and had just finished high school. I was twenty years old and considered very good looking. We immediately became friends, greatly enjoying each other's company. Our relationship was to continue for quite a few years, even surviving our later move to Czernowitz. Renate's father was a judge for the city of Radautz. A widower, he had a warm, colorful personality. He and I spent a great deal of time together, often going for long walks in the evening, talking about his two favorite topics, German poetry and music.

The recitals in which we performed gave Marcel and me the opportunity for introductions to the wealthy social elite of Radautz, the doctors, lawyers, and bankers of the Jewish community. These influential people were primarily Jewish and constituted the elite society of this town. The contacts we made at this time were to lay the groundwork for later introductions into the musical circles in Czernowitz.

Nevertheless, as time passed, our desire grew to leave this setting of such sorrow. We also yearned for life in a bigger city, with all the associated business and cultural possibilities. Thus we soon moved to Czernowitz, a city with a symphony orchestra, theaters, and many cultural institutions, along with a well established Jewish intelligentsia.

Papa found employment with a wholesale hardware company through Uncle Herman's and *Tante* Sabina's connections. Her brother was a high official in the "Intercontinentale Company". Papa's job was to travel to many European countries, including Italy, Belgium, and France to purchase tools in bulk for his employer. Papa possessed remarkable adaptability. Without extensive knowledge of hardware products or any knowledge of French or Italian, Papa relied on his extraordinary intelligence and business savvy to purchase merchandise at the most advantageous prices. Whenever he returned from his frequent trips, he was received by the president of the company and was generously rewarded. So began a new career for Papa and reinstatement of a more normal family life for us.

Marcel and I also found professional recognition. Introduced to some influential Jewish families, we were offered opportunities to perform recitals before small audiences. These performances helped us to establish our reputations as musicians and provided us with the possibility to take on private students. Inge, too, was offered a position teaching children German in the Governor's home. Our careers continued to flourish until the Russian occupation in 1940.

Military Career

In spring 1938, however, my work abruptly came to a halt when I was drafted into military service. I was the only one in my family unlucky enough to be of draft age. I was immediately assigned to an artillery division even though at that time, I was neither a Romanian citizen, nor did I know the Romanian language.

The head of my division was Captain Popescu, a member of the extreme right wing *Guarda de Fier* (Iron Guard), an organization sympathetic to Hitler and to the German cause. He was known to have shown cruelty to other Jewish soldiers, but for some reason he seemed to like me. His way of demonstrating this was to ignore me. Like every other draftee, I also was given a choice to either serve the full term totaling three years or to donate a horse to the unit for a reduction of one year of service. This exchange of the horse for one year of military service was called "*Calaras cu scimb*". Since my family had the money, I opted for the second choice and donated the monetary equivalent of the purchase price of a horse.

In the fall of that year, our division was called to participate in the "King's Maneuvers". Off we went towards an historic battlefield approximately two hundred kilometers away. I was assigned to a battery *approvisionare* (supply line). We traveled for many days in columns of horse-drawn carts. Just before the actual military exercise was to begin, we encountered such an unusually

heavy rainstorm that the exercise was canceled. The cold, relentless rain made travel along the dirt roads impossible. We were up to our knees in mud. Horses were falling down on all sides. Finally, we came to a complete standstill; nothing could move any further even though we were only a few kilometers from our destination.

Like everyone else, I was trying to find shelter. In the distance I saw a light which seemed to be emanating from a building. It took me several hours to drag myself through the mud towards that light. Progress was painfully slow. There were many moments when I thought I was hallucinating. When I finally reached the light, I saw that it was coming from a farmhouse. I was soaked through to my skin, exhausted, shivering, and hungry. I knocked at the door and only after pleading and begging did the farmer finally lead me inside.

At first my appearance probably frightened the man. Afterwards, when he saw my sorry condition and realized that he was in no danger, he tried to be helpful. Getting my feet out of my boots with my boots intact was impossible. They were filled up to my knees with mud. The only way to remove them was to slice the sides of each boot with a sharp knife. What a relief it was to get my soaked and aching feet out of my boots! After removing my uniform, I was given a dry blanket and handed a cup of hot tea. The farmer then pointed to a wooden board which would be my bed for the night. Even this meager shelter seemed

luxurious. Completely exhausted, I instantly fell into a deep sleep, extremely grateful for the farmer's kindness.

The following morning, I awoke to a clear and sunny day. It took quite some time before I realized where I was and what had happened to me. After a light breakfast, and his donation of an old pair of shoes, the farmer gave me directions to the nearest railroad station. I boarded the train to return to base, keeping a low profile by hiding out in the bathroom. My appearance was more like that of a deserter than of a soldier returning from maneuvers, especially since I wasn't even wearing my own boots.

Anticipating the worst on my return to base, I could not suppress my feelings of relief when I entered through the gatehouse. To my surprise, I soon found myself in the company of many of my comrades whose experiences were similar to mine. Other soldiers trickled in for several more days. News spread that many of the soldiers who didn't return had simply died of exhaustion.

My anxiety grew with time because I was afraid that I would have to face a court martial for deserting my unit. Finally, the moment came when the entire battery was called to assembly. Captain Popescu came out for inspection. After mustering the troops, he announced a complete amnesty, acknowledging the life-threatening circumstances that the weather had created. Needless to say, I had not expected such unusual fairness in judgment.

But my ordeal was not yet over. The following day I awoke with a high fever. After being examined in the infirmary, I was transferred to a military hospital where I was diagnosed with pneumonia. The medical treatment which I received was so poor that my condition continued to worsen. When I began coughing up blood, the doctors called my father because they thought that I would die. Papa was so alarmed when he saw me that he immediately sought outside help. After hearing a description of my condition, the doctor Papa had contacted prescribed another medication. It took only a few doses of this new medicine before my fever started to subside and I began to recover.

I remained in the hospital for about ten days, but one episode stands out in my memory. Late one night, while I was in the hospital, Papa came to see me, bringing with him some cold milk. Not only was cold milk a rare commodity, but later, when I asked him how he managed to get into the hospital that night, he told me that he had jumped over the fence behind the hospital to elude the guards. Such was the love and loyalty which characterized my family life.

When I finally recovered and returned to my unit, I was ordered to see the Captain. With great apprehension I entered his office. After I presented myself and he ordered me to be "at ease," the Captain began expressing his satisfaction with my ability to adjust to military life. In particular, he stated how

proud he was of my ability to learn Romanian. Then came the big surprise. I was being transferred to a unit in the Carpathian Mountains.

Life became much easier. The village to which I was sent was small but had a spectacular view. I was to be the houseguest of the Mayor and his family, who were very hospitable. I even found time to play my violin occasionally, to the delight of my host. The Mayor's unsophisticated taste for classical music was not exactly a high compliment, but I enjoyed having an appreciative audience nonetheless. Weekends, I usually spent with my family in Czernowitz. The routine stayed the same, week after week. It was not a bad life for a Jewish draftee in the Romanian Army.

My military responsibilities consisted of procuring and sending hay to the division headquarters. This task was a tremendous promotion and a job which was much less physically demanding than my previous responsibilities. I could recover completely from my pneumonia in relative comfort. My commanding officer, a Captain in the reserve who in civilian life was a school teacher, treated me as an equal. He gave me full proxy to sign and deliver periodic reports to the division while he pursued his teaching job, which was most of the time.

For doing my job well, I was promoted to Secretary, which entitled me to one silver stripe on my epaulettes. The soldiers who reported to me thought that I was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant because of the similarity in stripe design.

(My stripe had a slight zigzag, whereas the Lieutenant stripe was straight.) Needless to say, I did not correct their misimpression and enjoyed my new status, at least for a little while.

One Friday afternoon, in early spring of 1940, I was on my way home on leave. The political climate was very tense. The Russians, under Stalin, were demanding the return of the provinces of Bessarabia and the Northern Bukovina from Romania. According to the Treaty of Versailles, those provinces were part of the territories ceded to Romania at the conclusion of W.W.I. Romania, a relatively insignificant military power posturing itself against the mighty Soviet Empire, began to move military equipment and personnel eastward towards the border with Russia.

On this particular Friday afternoon, I was sitting in a window seat on a train en route to my home in Czernowitz, making notes in my notebook regarding the schedules for the following week. Glancing out of the window, I noticed freight trains loaded with military equipment traveling in the opposite direction from my train to the East. As we came up to the next train stop, two MPs approached and asked me to follow them. When the train stopped, I was escorted to a military command post. I was completely unaware of the reason for my detention, and I felt terribly frightened.

I waited under guard for approximately one hour until an officer appeared, looking at me with great suspicion. Initially, I was questioned about my identity,

destination and documents. Then came the questions which clarified the reason for my detention.

Question: "Did you notice the transport of military equipment?"

My answer: "Yes"

My interrogator then demanded to see my notebook. Until he read my notes, the officer was quite sure that I was a spy for the Russians. It was hours after my release before I truly appreciated how differently this situation could have ended. Under the heightened political unrest and the prevailing anti-Jewish sentiment, I could easily have been accused of passing secret military information to the Russians. G-d was with me.

By June, 1940, political tensions continued to escalate, and rumors were spreading that the Russians were coming. One Friday afternoon, I was on my way home to spend Shabbat with my family. Wearing my military uniform, I carried my briefcase filled with documents and reports of weekly summaries. My parents, anxious because of the increased tensions, were particularly happy to see me. That night, however, the Russian Army marched into Bassarabia and Northern Bukovina. We woke up the next morning under Russian occupation. I had no choice but to discharge myself from the Romanian Army. The next day, I destroyed all the military documents in my possession, and so abruptly ended my military career.

Under Russian Occupation

Overnight we became Russian subjects. Identity cards were issued for all citizens in the Russian and Romanian languages. Jews were singled out and their cards were marked "Jew".

Soon rumors circulated about the Russian infiltration program called "voluntary population exchange". Wealthy and well-known business leaders and those people who were politically active were picked up by Russian officials during the night and shipped off to Siberia. In their place, the Russians put people who were in high military or political positions. This "voluntary population exchange" was anything but voluntary.

In retrospect, I am firmly convinced that if the war between Germany and Russia had not erupted in 1941 but one or two years later, the Russians would have been able to complete this hideous plan. They proved this when, at the conclusion of W.W.II, they expelled millions of Germans from East Prussia and settled Poles in their places.

Slowly life was changing. Merchants as well as the population at large were hoarding all kinds of goods, including food. After some time, it was difficult to find even the most basic necessities. We began looking to the black market for our supplies, paying highly inflated prices for the simplest items. The Russians

bought everything in sight. Russian women could be seen wearing hand embroidered nightgowns as street dresses. Clothes, shoes, wristwatches, cameras were in great demand. As the situation worsened and shops were stripped of supplies, groups of Russian soldiers would demand entrance into private homes under the pretext of looking for suspects. As they departed, so did many valuables belonging to the homeowners.

The population was helplessly victimized by this conqueror. The duplicity with which the Russians treated even their comrades, who had suffered persecution under the Romanians for clandestine activities on behalf of Communist ideology, was remarkable. These Communist idealists who crossed over the border from Romania into the newly-occupied territory hoped to be received as heroes in the Communist world. To their dismay, they were not only unrecognized, but also unwanted. Instead of receiving a hero's welcome, they were deported to Siberia.

We lived in a rented villa at the periphery of the city, sharing the house with another family: Dr. Kalisher, his wife, his son, and his young daughter. The Kalishers and their daughter lived on the main floor; we lived upstairs. The son lived in the Mansard room, directly under the roof. The neighborhood was suburban, surrounded by open spaces.

The owners of the home directly across the street had fled to Romania, anticipating trouble from the Russians. Caretakers were left in charge to look

after the property. Most were Ukrainians and, unfortunately for us, they were anti-Semitic and vengeful. They proved to be the most reliable and eager volunteers that the Russians as well as the Germans could ever wish to find.

As we entered 1941, life became increasingly difficult. War rumors were rampant. Everyone was discussing the news, not only what was written, but also what was implied. German armies had marched in through the Balkan States on their advance into Russia. Romania, at that time, sided with Germany. Therefore, there was no resistance until the Germans reached the Russian border. By early spring of 1941, fighting had spread to the Seret River, not far from Czernowitz. The question most pressing was what we should do if the Russians decided to withdraw. There were only two choices: to remain and wait for the Germans or to go east with the Russians.

As the Germans reached the outskirts of our city, the Russian army set fire to all vital installations and challenged the population to plunder the shops shouting "Nothing useful should be left for the approaching German Army". How well I remember, so many years later, the frightening sight of people running through the streets, carrying everything they could possibly manage, from food to furniture, while the city was ablaze!

In the midst of this chaos, the exodus began of the Jewish population of Czernowitz to the East. It is impossible to describe the impact it had on me, to

see thousands of people, old and young, babies, men and women, healthy and sick, surging all in one direction: East. They carried bundles so large that at times I could see only legs beneath their belongings. The Russian army provided no help. Each family was on its own.

While this tragic procession continued for several days and nights, a shot was fired into the home situated across the street from us. Under those chaotic circumstances, this incident would most likely have gone unnoticed. However, the caretaker of that house was Ukrainian and knew that we were Jewish. He wasted no time in calling in the Russian military police, we surmised, telling them that the shot came from our house. Therefore, he concluded, we Jews must have guns. That speculation was enough for the Russians to appear at our door, usher us outside with machine guns, and line us up against the wall in our garden. When they checked our documents which indicated that we were Berlin natives and that we were Jewish, we realized that our fate was sealed; we had certainly reached the moment of death.

The soldier who was guarding us, a wild-looking man of short stature, walked up and down like a savage animal while pointing his machine gun at us. He was waiting for orders from his commander who, with some other soldiers, was tearing our house apart, looking for guns. As the search progressed inside, we stood against the wall outside, petrified and praying for a miracle. A terrifying thought entered my mind. I knew that we had no guns, and I also was quite sure

that Mr. and Mrs. Kalischer and their daughter had none; but what about their son? He was an introvert, and never engaged in any conversation, so no one ever knew what was on his mind. Physical and mental numbness gave way to terror as I became aware of what the soldiers might find in young Mr. Kalischer's room.

Finally, after a seemingly endless thirty minutes, we reached the climactic moment. The leader reappeared, signaled to our guard, and they all departed. Not one word was spoken; they just left us standing there. We all raised our heads toward the heavens thanking G-d for our reprieve.

Now came the time to decide whether to leave our home and go east, or to stay. Discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each choice amongst ourselves and with our friends the Kalischers, the Faliks and the Kleins, we all decided to stay. There were several reasons for coming to this decision. First, we had no transportation; we would have had to walk. Second, the city was already encircled by the Germans. How far could we get before falling into their hands? Sadly we realized that there was no chance of escape.

Later on, after the end of the War, we learned from eyewitnesses that the exodus had grown in great numbers as it passed through villages and towns continuing into Bassarabia until the refugees finally assembled in a forest near the city of Chotin. The German Air Force, monitoring this exodus from the sky,

bombed the entire area with incendiary bombs. What followed was a massacre of indescribable proportion. There was no escape for those three hundred thousand souls.

I cannot describe fully the range and depth of emotions which we experienced during the transition between the Russian withdrawal and the German Army's invasion of our city. We vacillated from intense anxiety, to deep despair, to total apathy. The Russian withdrawal continued at a fast pace even as the shelling and fires slowly subsided. We waited, locked in our homes, listening to the radio day and night, hoping for another miracle.

Under German Occupation

Late spring of 1941 arrived with its usual, natural regularity, but the patterns of our lives were irrevocably disrupted. The moment we heard over the radio that the Germans had taken our city, a heavy pall engulfed us. A collective shudder rippled through the Jewish community. We were terrified and trapped. Since our name sounded more German than Jewish, Papa thought it advisable to put the brass nameplate which he had removed from our home in Berlin on to our current front door. Peeking out from behind the curtains, we saw German Panzer tanks rolling down our street daily. We did not dare to leave our house.

After a few days, the first Einsatztruppen, a branch of the S.S., went into action, going from house to house, rounding up Jews. We were hiding in the basement as they came onto our street. We looked from one to the other, as if for the last time; holding hands in complete silence, our teeth chattering uncontrollably. Looking out through a tiny basement window, we saw the boots of the German soldiers approach our house. I remember so clearly how fast my heart was beating. The S.S. soldiers stood in front of our door. At that moment I could think only of the "angel of death" who passed over the Jewish houses in Egypt. Moments later, the Germans mysteriously left. After their departure we tried to comprehend what had just happened. We were certain that we were spared because the S.S. soldiers assumed that the name on the brass plate signified a

German Christian home. Dear G-d, how glad we were that my father had thought of taking that nameplate with us from Berlin.

We remained in hiding for days. Like the rest of our Jewish community, we had prepared for this possibility by stocking up on food and other supplies. Most of our friends and neighbors had telephones which became our lifeline to each other. We were in telephone contact with the Faliks and the Kleins all through this period, sharing news and information. This contact helped to alleviate our isolation. Since electricity and water continued without interruption, our lives remained bearable, although we often felt like prisoners in our home.

Most of the time that we were hidden, we listened to the radio, our only link to the world. One broadcast from the Soviet Union announced that the German military commander of Czernowitz gave permission to special SS troops to take care of "The Jewish Problem." In three days they executed three thousand Jews: men, women and children. From other local broadcasts we learned that life in our city was returning to "normal". In time we saw some people venturing out to the street. Finally, one day when we saw a neighbor, a Christian, coming towards our house, we invited him in. We were so desperate for contact with the outside world that we risked divulging our hiding place to him. We learned from him that the caretaker from across the street fled with the Russians. We were thrilled! Our neighbor, who was planning to go into town, agreed to return to us with news. When he returned, he told us that many Jews had been taken

away by the SS and were probably killed. However, he believed that he saw some Jews in the streets. Many stores were open for business.

The killings stopped a week following the German occupation. It seemed less risky to leave our hiding places for short periods of time. Since our stockpile of food and supplies was depleted, we desperately needed staples to survive. One warm summer day I decided to venture out. Someone had to take the risk. I had to see for myself what was going on. As I left home, I assured my family that I would be all right and told them not to worry. Nearing the city limits, I felt my heart beating faster and faster. When I left Germany, I had hoped never to set eyes on a German soldier again. Unfortunately, that was not to be. The streets were full of German military personnel. In order not to attract undue attention, I walked calmly and purposefully to Nikolausgasse to see Emil Klein and his family.

What an emotional reunion! They wanted me to bring my family into their home so we could all live together. We discussed the situation, searching for but not finding any way of escape. Our only hope was liberation by the Allied Forces, a possibility which for the moment seemed hopeless. I left with a heavy heart, very depressed.

Leaving the Kleins, I turned the corner and found myself face to face with a group of soldiers (not SS) escorting a number of young men. I said to myself,

"This is it". I was politely "invited" by the soldiers to join the group. Nobody talked. Everyone was terrified. We didn't know where the soldiers would take us. After walking for about half an hour, we finally arrived at a huge lumber yard. There we were paired off and instructed to move huge telephone poles from one pile to another. Two soldiers, one on each side, picked up a pole to show us how to do the task. This did not seem to be too difficult for two strong, well-fed, healthy young soldiers. Since we obviously were not in good physical condition, they permitted four of us to lift each pole, two on each side. It was late in the afternoon, and we were hungry, thirsty, and tired. While we worked, we watched the soldiers sit on logs, slicing salamis and drinking beer. Occasionally, they threw bits and pieces of their snack to their sleeping dogs. The dogs enjoyed the bits of meat tremendously, while our mouths watered, just remembering how good meat could taste.

During one of our maneuvers with the poles, as my partner and I were trying to lower our end, lining it up with the others in the pile, my partner's hand slipped. Since I was unable to support the weight of my side of the pole myself, my left hand was crushed under the edge of the pole. It took two men to lift the pole enough to free my hand. I was in excruciating pain, and my hand immediately swelled. Consequently, I was released from further duties, free to leave.

I went directly to the Jewish Hospital because my swollen hand had begun to turn blue. I was treated by a physician who diagnosed a broken metacarpal

bone. He placed my entire arm in an exaggeratedly huge cast to discourage further "invitations" to slave labor. He also gave me a certificate stating that I was unable to work for at least six weeks.

When I returned home after such a prolonged absence, my parents were thrilled to see me, but terribly upset about my injury. They wanted to hear every detail of my ordeal again and again. The positive side of this experience was that I now had relative freedom to move about Czernowitz. I became the family's primary link to the outside world, able to bring in the daily necessities for survival.

Supplies of even the most basic necessities were dwindling in all of Czernowitz; even soap was becoming a rare luxury. The Kleins and Faliks had a friend, a medical doctor, who lived across the street from them. A creative entrepreneur, he began manufacturing soap in his basement and needed a distributor. The Kleins introduced me to this doctor, and I took over the distribution of his soap. Painful as it was, my injury turned into quite an advantage in the surreal world which had become our reality.

One day, I met my good friend Kahn on the street in the town center. Kahn was a musician, band leader with connections to some Romanian officers, who had been given administrative powers while the German army maintained military control. The shortage of necessities made Kahn's connections very valuable. Kahn, the doctor and I met to set the price structure for our joint enterprise. The

formula we used was very simple. Kahn paid me double my cost for each bar of soap. He, in turn, doubled his price to his contacts. Gradually, I added other items to my profitable business.

As I gradually increased my stock, I had to develop a method to conceal the increased number of items I carried with me. On many occasions I was a walking warehouse! Mutti wrapped dress or suit material around my upper torso to conceal my inventory. This was a risky enterprise, at best, but one which was necessary for our survival. Walking through the streets, I held my casted hand up high, camouflaging my black market activity. I must have been a rather grotesque sight, since people stepped aside to let me pass.

After four weeks of doing "business" with relative freedom from "volunteer work", I finally had to see my doctor at the Jewish Hospital for a checkup. He decided that it was time to remove the cast in order to preserve the mobility of my left hand. I understood that from that time on, I would again be a target for the next "Razzia", or roundup of "volunteer" workers. As I anticipated, this happened a few days after my cast was removed. While I was walking down the street on one of my "business trips", a group of young Jewish men surrounded by German soldiers approached me. There was no escape. The soldiers very politely asked me to join them. Realizing that I had no choice, I politely "accepted their invitation" and went off with the group to an unknown destination. At that point,

we were ironically a group of ten men, a "complete minyan". We prayed silently that G-d would watch over us.

My first thoughts turned to my family. I had no possible way of letting them know what had happened, yet I knew they would be worried if I didn't return home at the expected time. In most cases, " volunteer workers" were released in the evening, and instructed to return the next day. I hoped that this would be the case with me.

Finally, our group arrived at a place called "Seifert's Waschanstalt". It was a laundry owned by Herr Seifert, who had contracted with the German military to clean the soldier's uniforms. The laundry was a very large plant containing long, rectangular vats filled with uniforms soaked in a hot, soapy solution. Alongside those vats were similarly shaped wooden tables. Our job was to pull those heavy, soaked uniforms out of the vats, spread them on the tables and scrub them with stiff brushes. It was heavy, gruesome work, yet we derived some satisfaction from knowing that these blood-soaked garments, riddled with bullet holes, belonged to Germans who paid with their lives for executing Hitler's orders. The "voluntary" laundry duty was to last several weeks until, in July, we were ordered into the Ghetto. The only benefit of this experience was the fact that we were able to return to our families after work each night. The soldiers guarding us made it very clear, however, that if we didn't return the next day, the SS would come looking for us.

Out of necessity we developed a silent communication system, using eye contact and blinking, to signify the different thoughts we were trying to convey. Through our non-verbal body language, we were able to signal our shared feelings of horror mixed with satisfaction. This silent communication was more than just a way of expressing our thoughts to one another. It became a method of regaining some control over our lives; the freedom of silent expression restored a degree of dignity to our existence. This same silent communication sustained us throughout the war, even months later, when we were working in the forced labor camp in the stone quarry.

Even through all of these hardships, Papa maintained his priority of helping others who were more needy than he. He was a true altruist. On several occasions, knowing that the Romanian prisons were filling up with Jewish prisoners, Papa decided that he must try to help them. Surmising that the food rations for the prisoners would be less than adequate, Papa decided to bring food to the prisoners. He gathered up whatever food he could and, at the risk of his own imprisonment, he went to the prisons and asked to be allowed to distribute the food himself. The guards, to everyone's surprise, honored his request.

Life in the Ghetto

The summer weeks of 1941 went by. More ominous rumors spread through the Jewish community of Czernowitz. The latest news was that the Germans were planning our deportation to the East. These rumors were so grave, we knew we had to take them seriously. When we asked our sources where their information originated, their answer was "The Jewish *Plotke* Agency" (*Plotke* means rumor in Yiddish). Despite the lack of official information, our "*Plotke* Agency" had already proven to be a reliable source that simply could not be ignored.

On a very hot summer Friday in late July, 1941, the Germans issued a proclamation that all Jews must wear a yellow star. This star was to be worn on the left side of the outer garment. It was to be a six-pointed Star of David, six cm wide. All Jews were responsible to make their own stars. The proclamation continued that by noon the next day (*Shabbat*), all Jews had to be in a designated area of the city, the old Jewish Section, to be called "The Ghetto." Any Jew found outside this area after Saturday, noon, would be shot on sight.

Panic penetrated the heart of each and every one of us when we heard this news. We felt utterly desperate. Again, we felt trapped. Yet, despite all odds, we still maintained a spark of hope for survival, if only through a miracle.

With the establishment of the Ghetto, we again faced the terrible task of packing our necessities and leaving everything else behind. We again faced the

uncertainty of not knowing what the future would bring. Life had taken another critical turn. We again looked to Papa for emotional strength and guidance. Papa's hopes for our future and his firm belief in G-d never wavered; he supported all of us.

Since it was Shabbat, my parents decided to walk rather than take public transportation. We said good-bye to the Kalisher family, not realizing that this would be the last time we would see or hear from them. We left early to ensure that we would arrive at the gates of the Ghetto before the deadline of twelve noon.

We packed our little suitcases with what we believed to be our most important necessities, mainly clothing and a few personal items, and then left what had been our home for the past five years. Convinced that we would never return, we found it hard to believe that this was happening to us again. G-d only knew what would become of us. We felt demoralized and helpless, having lost all control over our lives.

Our destination was Nickolasgasse #5, the home of the Faliks and Kleins. As we walked towards the Ghetto, I carried not only my suitcase but also my violin case, which I clutched tightly to my chest. It was a very fine instrument, built by Bergonzi. It was truly my most valuable possession and a very important part of

my life. I also hoped that my musical expertise would somehow help my family to obtain some special privileges.

Our walk was a silent one; each of us was lost in private thoughts. We had a common understanding that we were headed into a very serious and, most likely, inescapable situation. So nervous and frightened was I, that I could feel my insides trembling with each step.

As we approached the Ghetto, we saw German soldiers stationed at the barricaded entrance, watching our arrival. Overwhelmed by panic, anger, fear and frustration, we shuddered at the sight of the murderers. In an attempt to further intimidate the throngs of Jews approaching the gates, the soldiers were playing with their pistols. We felt as if we were walking into the lion's den to be sacrificed.

We waited to reach the front of the line. Finally, it was our turn. One of the soldiers asked me to open the violin case. He then asked if I could play the violin. I, of course, answered "yes" and offered to play for him at that moment. He, instead, took the violin out of my hands, and looked at it. As I reached to replace it into the case, the soldier grabbed it from me. That was the last I saw of my beloved violin.

I felt violated and was devastated at my sudden loss. When that soldier took my violin, he not only robbed me of my precious instrument , but he also robbed me of my dreams for a musical future. I was convinced that this soldier, who most likely had prior experience in taking Jewish lives without the slightest hesitation, could not possibly appreciate the fine quality of this instrument. Nor could he care about the devastating effect his brutal act had on me. As I passed through the gates of the ghetto, I glanced back one last time at the spot where I had last held my violin. There was no sign of the instrument or its case.

When we arrived at the Kleins' home, we fell into each other's arms, drawing strength from each other. Our friends, Emil and Manya, who lived within the designated borders of the Ghetto, had asked us earlier to join them in their home. This time we had to accept their invitation as we had no alternative.

Emil Klein was a concert violinist who had studied in Prague under Professor Kotzean. Professor Kotzean and my violin professor, Petchnikoff, were close friends and colleagues. Emil and I also developed a close personal and professional relationship. Emil's wife, Manya, taught Latin and Greek at the local high school. She was a highly-educated and gracious lady. As a child in Odessa, she had lost both her parents. Her relatives, the Faliks, took her in and raised her as their own daughter. Thus we suddenly found ourselves housemates with the Kleins, the Faliks and others, thirty of us in all, sharing a four room house with one bathroom.

Living conditions were very cramped and uncomfortable. There was no air conditioning, of course, and therefore no respite from the heat. Nighttime was chaotic. Each of us tried to accommodate the needs of the others as we helped each other to feel more comfortable, despite the difficult conditions. I slept on a table. Four or five people slept sitting on a sofa with their feet on chairs. Yet despite this lack of comfort, no one complained.

Food was very scarce. We shared what we had, but our rations were barely sufficient to survive. A thin person by nature, I lost so much weight that my clothes no longer fit me. My only valuable possession was a small gold ring, a gift from my parents, which I wore on my right ring finger. As I lost weight, my fingers became thinner, too. One day, when I went to the bathroom, my ring slipped off into the toilet and was lost. Not only did I have a deep emotional attachment to this ring, but it was the next to the last item of value which I still possessed that could possibly be used to bribe my way out of a difficult situation. I was distraught.

Life in the ghetto was chaotic. Paradoxically, at the same time that we felt afraid and isolated, we also felt an incredible bond to those with whom we shared a common enemy. Even in our desperation, as unbelievable as it may seem, we clung to hope. This hope was evident in the attitude and strength of my parents and all the others who continued to survive, day after day, under these horrific conditions.

The only way to obtain life's necessities in the ghetto was through barter. Jewelry was most often traded for food. Medications were hoarded, each family afraid to give up what little they had. The decision of what to trade became a major issue. We never knew which of our meager possessions we might need in the future. Yet the need for food was so overriding that even the most valuable possessions eventually were given away in order to sustain life.

Periodically, German soldiers would walk through the streets of the ghetto, showing their presence. They generally didn't harm anyone, because they knew we could not escape. They just wanted to "remind us" of who was in charge

Looking for a magical exit from this hell, we believed rumors which circulated freely through the ghetto, no matter how unrealistic they were. One which kept resurfacing was that for a very large sum of money in the form of gold or American dollars, which we called "Luckshen" (Yiddish for noodles), passage to freedom could be bought. The rumor was that an underground passageway was organized by Romanian officials interested in bribe money. In reality, no one escaped from the ghetto, but many lost a lot of money trying.

One morning, the Germans issued a proclamation that each head of household was required to register all family members with the German Ghetto Command. In this way, the Germans would have a complete list of the entire Jewish population of the Ghetto. Anyone failing to register his family would be killed. By

now it was obvious that the death penalty was their punishment of choice for any infraction.

During that time there was a known Communist who shared the same name as my friend, Emil Klein, the violinist. My friend was warned to be careful since the Germans, who could not find Emil the Communist, might instead come looking for him. They might want to make an example out of him, regardless of the fact that they had the wrong person. Emil and his wife Manya went into hiding, telling only the Faliks where they would be.

As expected, one day a German soldier knocked at our door looking for Emil. Mr. Falik answered the door. When he was asked where Emil was, he answered "I don't know". The soldier then said, "All right, if you can't tell us where he is, we'll take you instead." Mr. Falik was so frightened that he led the soldier right to Emil. The Germans took Emil and his wife away. We never saw them again.

This drama played itself out in front of our eyes. We were stunned by Falik's action. Not one ~~work~~ word was said. There was a deafening silence. Tragedies in the ghetto were constant occurrences. Casualties caused by sickness, emotional distress and suicide were daily happenings. Ominous rumors added to the distress. We lived from moment to moment.

Control of the ghetto population was typical of German efficiency. A committee of elders in the Jewish community was selected by the Germans as liaisons to the Ghetto population. Several times a week, the Germans issued a list of names to the committee. The committee assembled all heads of families at the *Piatza* (town square) for the announcement of the names on that list. Those chosen had to be in the *Piatza* early the following morning prepared for the next transport to an unknown destination. Medical professionals such as doctors and pharmacists were temporarily exempted.

One day, when my father was not at the *Piatza* for the reading, his name was called out. My brother Marcel had a friend named David Jurgrau, who was in the Piatza that day for the reading. For some unknown reason, the reader called "Dr. Wagner" instead of Osias Wagner. David answered the call when no one came forward, claiming to be Dr. Wagner. He was to be excused from the next morning's transport, because he had been designated as a doctor. After the announcement, David came running to Marcel explaining what had transpired. We were already packed and ready to leave, our belongings loaded onto a horse-drawn cart. Instead of going, we unpacked the cart. We were safe for the moment. After the war, we learned that there were no survivors from that particular transport. Could this have been divine intervention yet again?

Deportation

In October, 1941, the German military authorities decreed that all Jews must leave Czernowitz. Although Jews had lived in the Bukovina for centuries, thriving in business and in all professions, the order from Germany was that the Bukovina must be "*Judenrein*". The list of those families scheduled for the next deportation was posted, and our name was included. We had twenty-four hours to prepare to leave. Again, we were faced with packing and good-byes, unsure of what the future would bring but convinced it would not be easy. The dreaded moment was approaching. Rumors indicated that we were to be sent to work on farms. Each family, however, hoped to be kept together.

Along with the others, we loaded our belongings onto horse-drawn carts. We were marched to the railroad station under heavy military escort as bystanders cheered the "cleansing of their city" from Jews. Anguish overwhelmed us as we waited at the railroad station for our departure. No comfort was to be found as we vacillated between horror and terror one moment, and complete numbness another.

All the dramatic and life-threatening moments since our flight from Berlin faded in the face of the utter humiliation and dehumanization that followed. We had reached the nadir of our lives; our destinies were in the hands of thugs and murderers who were herding us into slaughterhouses like animals.

Map relates to text Chapter "Deportation" beginning on page 68.

How to describe the indescribable? Men, women and children including those old, young and sick all were assembled at the train station and shoved into cattle cars. Doors were shut and locked from the outside. This time we were completely trapped. More than fifty years later, this scene remains seared into my memory, never fading with the passage of time.

At least one hundred men, women and children were in our car. We stared at each other with glazed eyes, numb, not yet able to consciously grasp the full gravity of our predicament. My family watched as Papa raised his hands towards the ceiling of the car, moving his lips in silent prayer.

This gesture triggered an inner dialogue within me, probing the mystery of our survival so far. We all had firmly believed that the fervor and sincerity of Papa's prayers had provided us with some divine protection. Yet why were we spared, while my brother Jacques was denied the agony of life? Was he better off?

As Papa prayed, we felt the train lurch forward. Leaning against each other in the overcrowded cattle car, we tried in vain to find comfortable positions. From everywhere we heard adults and children crying. Others were screaming. Many people fainted.

Watching Mutti suffering from a migraine headache, complete with nausea and vomiting, I reached over to massage her head with nearly acrobatic skill.

Normally, this motion would have given her some relief from the intense pain. Here my gesture seemed futile. Ingeborg was crouched near Mutti on the floor in a most awkward position; she appeared to be in shock, silently sobbing as the train droned on. Marcel was somewhere in the rear of the car. We couldn't see him, but we kept in touch by calling to each other over the cacophony of the screaming and crying that filled the cattle car. Changing our position was risky, because once someone stood up, the space he or she had occupied was immediately filled in by the crush of others.

As we traveled, conditions inside the car worsened. We were unsure of the direction in which we were traveling. As cars were maneuvered among trains going to different destinations, we were jolted and dislodged from what little refuge we were able to establish for ourselves. Some of our travel partners began vomiting, which only contributed more to the general misery and desperation. The sanitary provisions consisted solely of two buckets on each end of the cattle car. The stench was overwhelming.

And so we traveled for what turned out to be one and one half days, losing all track of time, not sure of when night turned into day or day into night. Finally, with a bone-jarring lurch, the train ground to a halt. The doors were unlocked and opened. We had arrived at our destination. Welcome daylight poured in through the open door, but our location and our destination was a mystery to us.

We soon learned that we had arrived at a city called "Ataki" in Bessarabia, which is located on the river Djniestre in Romania. Ataki was the last stop in Romania. It was a ghost city on the border with the Ukraine, which had been completely destroyed by the retreating Russian army. As the cattle car doors opened, we began to disembark. Romanian soldiers greeted us roughly with screaming, pushing and shoving. We were weakened from lack of water and nourishment and stiff from having been cramped into the cattle cars for all of those hours. Many of us had not even once changed position. It was difficult just to stand upright.

The devastation which we saw all around us mirrored our emotional condition. We watched as large numbers of refugees continued to arrive. Trains discharged their unfortunate human cargo like waste.

We later discovered the tremendous fortune hidden within our misfortune. Night time arrivals were greeted by hoards of local Ukrainians and Romanian soldiers who generally beat and robbed the refugees of their meager possessions. Many of these new arrivals were then thrown into the Djniestre River and drowned. We had avoided this tragic end simply by having arrived during daylight.

As we made our way on wobbly legs down the slippery, muddy hill to the shore, the soldiers pushed and shoved, causing many to lose their footing and fall. Those of us who were able helped the elderly and weaker among us. We were

among thousands that were lined up at the shore of the river to board barges that would take us across the waterway to the Eastern shore of the Djniestre River. The barges were primitive wooden rafts loaded to capacity with about twenty people each. Many families were wrenched apart at the time of boarding. Fortunately our family was not separated.

We could see from our barge that mass confusion prevailed on the far side of the river. Someone from our barge decided that if we, as a group, looked as if we knew where we were going once we landed on the Eastern shore, then perhaps the soldiers would leave us alone. We naturally grouped together with others from our same cattle car and began to move like an organized group, as if we had been given instructions to march to Moghilev. We chose Moghilev because of its proximity to our location and because we heard rumors that a friend of the family was a leader among the Jews who had arrived there earlier. The strategy worked. We continued on to Moghilev without any challenge.

Upon our arrival, we saw that this city, like Ataki, had been completely destroyed by the retreating Russian army. No electricity, water or waste disposal system remained. Moghilev had been the largest city in Transnistria, a province in the Ukraine. Even though it was under German military occupation, the Germans had agreed to maintain a Romanian civilian administration. The person in charge was the Prefect (Governor), who reported directly to the German military command. At this time, the Prefect was Colonel Baleanu.

Moghilev previously had been proclaimed "Judenrein" by the Germans. When the first groups of Jewish refugees had arrived from Radautz, their leader had negotiated with Colonel Baleanu that if they were allowed to stay, they would bring the city of Moghilev back to life. This spokesman was Siegfried Yaegendorf, and his background provided him with a certain degree of credibility and respect from the Germans. He had been an engineer with the German company "Siemens" and an officer in the Romanian Army during W.W.I. By proving that among them they had all types of skilled and professional workers with the knowledge and skill to restore the city to its pre W.W.II status, Yaegendorf convinced Colonel Baleanu of the merits of his plan. Baleanu, in turn, convinced the German military command to allow the stream of refugees into Moghilev to continue.

Unfortunately, I was not to enjoy the shelter that Yagendorf's negotiations had provided for us. As we stood in line in Moghilev waiting for something to happen, Romanian soldiers went through the line, separating out thirty young, healthy looking men for work detail. I was unfortunate enough to be among those chosen. At that moment of separation, I looked back to see Mutti and Inge crying. Marcel was standing silently, petrified, and Papa, his eyes moist, was moving his lips in characteristic silent prayer. We stretched our arms towards each other, unsure of whether we ever would see each other again. I found

myself looking for some comfort and recalled the blessing which my father had received from his grandfather, the Schotzer Rov, Chaim Wagner, "You, and your children, and your children's children will always be protected and saved by the Almighty". I held on to this blessing as if it were something concrete, a life jacket. Echoes of this blessing had given me strength in the past, and once again enabled me to face what was to come.

I was marched off to an unknown destination with the others who had been singled out. We walked for endless hours, escorted by a few Romanian soldiers, sharing with them whatever food we had. We were fortunate that they were not brutal. They even seemed to be decent people, giving us opportunities to stop several times along the way for rest. At one point, I gave one of the soldiers a gold watch which had been hidden in my sock, a bribe to ensure continued kindness.

After walking much of the day, we heard trucks filled with Romanian soldiers approaching us from behind. We were all so exhausted from the long march that our soldier escorts negotiated a ride for all of us on those trucks.

Several hours later, long after nightfall, we arrived at what was to be our home for the next several years, Carriara DePiatra. In the dark, we could barely make out the silhouettes of abandoned barracks in an abandoned stone quarry.

The barracks were about ten to fifteen feet above ground. We were assigned to our barracks and each of us chose a "bed", a wooden board covered with some straw. Field mice shared our living quarters. We soon fell into an exhausted sleep, shivering in the cold night, escaping reality for a few hours.

Next morning, we were awakened by screaming guards at daybreak. By the light of day, we were able to see our surroundings. The area was barren, inhospitable, not a tree or bush in sight. It seemed as if nothing had ever lived there. After a breakfast of hot tea and bread made from corncobs, we were given stone cutting tools and briefly instructed in how to use them. So began our careers as stone cutters.

Labor Camp

Winter, 1942. I had been working in the forced labor camp stone quarry for slightly more than a year. Life in the camp was monotonous, the same routine day after day. Every morning we were awakened at 5:00 AM. After a breakfast of tea and bread made from corn cobs, the same breakfast we received our first morning, we went to work. The work area was filled with commotion. Soldiers watched as peasants came into camp with their empty horse-drawn wagons to be loaded with the stones we had quarried. These stones were used to fortify the roads for the heavy German military equipment. We were given a midday break of more bread and soup made from potato skins. After working through the afternoon, we were given a dinner meal that was essentially a repeat of the noon meal. We often worked through the night, allowed only a few hours of rest before repeating the pattern the next day. As a result, we were so exhausted at the end of each day that we collapsed into bed and immediately fell asleep. There was no time or energy to recuperate. We were part of the machinery for the German military.

Our only possessions were contained in the bundles which we had brought to camp with us. As the temperature dropped with the change in seasons, we added layers to what we wore. At night, we would cover ourselves with additional clothes. As our clothing wore out or became soiled, we turned it inside

out. We did laundry with plain water as no one wanted to waste the precious little soap we had on clothing. We wanted to save it to wash our bodies.

Anyone with carpentry skills was volunteered to board up the holes in the walls of our barracks. The soldiers guarding us gave special privileges to those skilled individuals who agreed to repair their living quarters as well.

We always lived under tremendous fear. The first contingent of soldiers who guarded us were not bad people. Although they were armed, they did not exhibit any physical violence towards us. Mostly farmers, they had been forced into guard duty far from home just as we were forced into labor. Unlike the Germans whose mission was to destroy the Jews, their mission was to see to it that the stone was quarried. As long as we met our daily quotas, they were satisfied. Our quota was one cubic meter of split stones per person per day.

Our anxiety increased each time a new contingent of guards arrived. Stress levels remained high until we got to know each other. Once we realized that the new guards would not harm us if we did our job well, the tension eased. There were, of course, some cruel guards, but we learned early that if we complained, the treatment would be worse. So we kept quiet. Other guards showed compassion. If they had any extra food at the end of the day, they would give it to us. On one very cold day in winter, a Sergeant Major took off his gloves and gave them to an older prisoner. I witnessed this myself.

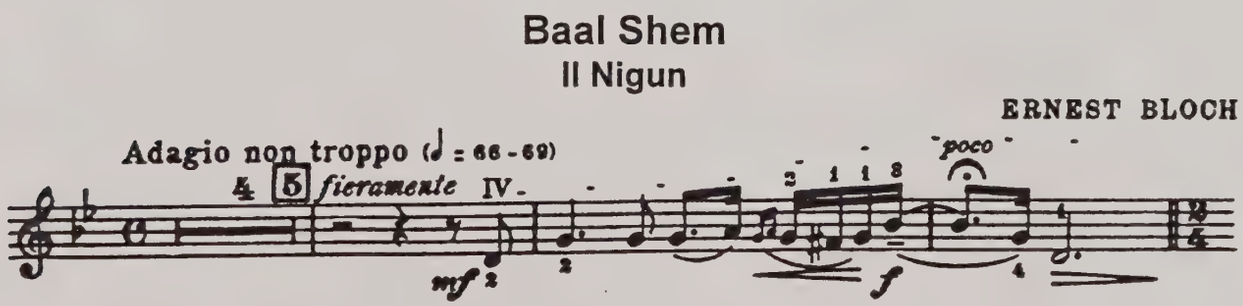
Some soldiers returned on rotation and greeted us in a friendly manner. Nonetheless, we never engaged in conversation with them unless they initiated the dialogue. Even amongst ourselves, we talked only when we were sure that we were not observed, and then only in whispers. The only safe time for us to speak to each other was during the nights; even then we had to be careful. There was always danger from the possible "plant" that the Germans might have placed in our midst.

I don't remember everyone's name, but those with whom I developed the closest relationships were Bibi Geltner, Schpitz, and the two Dashevsky brothers. Bibi was my most trusted buddy. He slept on the board next to mine and we often whispered long into the night. Schpitz's name was not really Schpitz. He had a pointed head, thus his nickname. He was a charming young man, but he talked too much. The Dashevsky brothers were very young and good comrades. They came from somewhere in Bessarabia.

As laborers, we were hand-picked for our strength, age and good health. Our biggest fear was that we would get sick. If we were unable to work, we would be replaced and, with no medical care, die. Our next greatest worry was that the Germans would demand some of our men. These threats hung over us constantly.

We did not find out until many months later just how fortunate we were to have been assigned to this particular quarry. In the quarries to the northeast, the prisoners were not treated as well. Those quarries were managed primarily by the Germans, who eventually killed nearly all of their prisoners.

Although the chances of survival were slim, at times the dream of this possibility dominated my thoughts. The yearning for freedom almost drove me mad.I knew quite well that if I were to survive physically, I must also find a way to save myself mentally. I found a haven in my memory and imagination by recalling happier events in my life. These images paraded in front of me like a picture gallery, visible to me alone. I imagined myself working on a difficult musical passage, using the fingers of my left hand to play soundless music on a piece of wood or stone. Through this silent music, notes audible only to me, I appealed to G-d. One of my favorite melodies " The Nigun", composed by Ernst Bloch, was a piece I used to perform very softly and with a great deal of feeling. For me, it was music for my soul, as I pictured myself playing it loudly and powerfully, like a blast of the shofar calling to G-d for help.



Memories of other scenes of my happy youth, vacation times, Jewish festival celebrations, and family occasions also gave me strength and solace. Despite the hard labor, the severe malnourishment, and the incessant humiliation, I succeeded in developing a feeling of victory over my captors. At times, I even managed to smile inwardly, knowing that I was overcoming the degradation the guards were attempting to inflict upon me. This coping mechanism has been helpful to me, even until today in my management of stressful situations.

On every Jewish holiday, we were ordered to work through the night. In a calculated and vindictive move, we were ordered to "celebrate" by loading freight cars with stones. Standing approximately one foot below ground level, we had to throw heavy loads of stones above our heads into the waiting train using a large pitchfork. We did this with our bare hands on the splintered, unforgiving handles of the pitchfork, which caused us to suffer from terrible, weeping blisters. I remember one of those nights distinctly. It was Yom Kippur, 1943. My thoughts, and I'm sure those of most of the other prisoners, were focused on the prayer of Kol Nidre, which many of us were undoubtedly reciting to ourselves. On that night, I pledged to G-d that if He allowed me to survive, I would pray to Him every day for the rest of my life in gratitude for the gift of life. I made this pledge under the open sky, for the Almighty to hear me, and so He did.

Towards the end of 1943, rumors again spread throughout the camp, hinting at the retreat of the German Army. Although the sources were shaky at best, we

hoped and prayed that there was some truth to these rumors. We were skeptical, yet we felt an emotional and spiritual renewal... we felt hope! But these stirrings were only temporary. The monotony of everyday life again set in, and our hopes slowly faded.

One day in the spring of 1944, as we were working in the stone quarry, we heard distant explosions. Time went on, and the noise appeared to move closer. I had a feeling that something crucial was going to happen soon. Suddenly we could clearly identify British Bombers flying overhead. We activated our silent communication system using only our eyes. Even though our hearts were rejoicing, we could not afford to give any outward sign of our feelings or thoughts. As we watched the bombers, we had to be careful that we were not observed by the soldiers who guarded us. Our situation was perilous; we were not sure of how our captors would react to this new development. They easily could decide to shoot all of us summarily. Strangely, the possibility of being bombed or shot no longer worried us. We had long ago given up the every day fear for our lives. We wanted this daily grind to end, even if that end meant death. At the same time, we believed that our survival was now a real possibility.

Day after day, the bombings continued without disrupting our routine. Several months later we became unwilling witnesses to an unspeakable atrocity committed by the Germans. Approximately two to three kilometers from our

labor camp was a German prison camp for Russian prisoners of war. On a clear day the compound could be seen from our vantage point. Since the prison camp was very large, we assumed that many thousands of Russian prisoners were confined there.

One clear day in the spring of 1944, German airplanes dropped incendiary bombs on this prison camp. The area was razed. Not even a mouse could have survived this brutal attack. The bombings continued for about an hour, yet we were forced to maintain our pace in the stone quarry. We were overwhelmed by compassion for those innocents who had lost their lives and stunned by the horror of what the Germans had done. Once the shock of what we had witnessed sank in, we were besieged by terror. Even though we were performing a vital job, keeping the roads open for German military equipment, we feared that we could be the next target. After all, we reasoned, were we Jews more worthy of survival than the Russian prisoners of war? This one horrific act transformed our apathy into fear. At the same time, rumors of massive German retreat again began circulating wildly through our camp, so we maintained some hope. We heard heavy bombardment coming closer and closer. This led us to conclude that the Russian army was fast approaching.

One glorious, wonderful morning late in the summer of 1944, we awoke to a deafening silence. By this time we had been in the camp for two and one half years. Every day we had awakened to the sound of soldiers screaming and

shouting their orders and the noise of peasants' carts as they rolled along the stones on steel-rimmed wheels. For a while we were still, afraid to move or make any sound. We were held in our places like the stones embedded in the ground we had quarried. We feared that armored exchanges would follow this temporary respite. Slowly, we crept to the entrance of our shack, afraid to look out. We began to debate all the possibilities which might occur with the elation of liberated, or at least, unguarded prisoners.

Curiosity finally overcame most of our fear, yet we were still afraid that this was a trap. We gathered together and decided that a few of our men should venture out and walk around the immediate area. Several men volunteered and agreed to signal us whether or not this was some kind of trick.

The significance of this decision cannot be overstated. Here we were, a group of grown men who had not been allowed to make even the most basic decision in life since we were forced into the Ghetto in Czernowitz. Suddenly our destiny appeared to be back in our own hands. We had decisions to make!

After the initial scouting, we decided to enlarge the area of exploration. Gradually we realized that truly no one else was around. No one was outside! It was amazing! Our guards had fled. We threw down our tools, embraced each other, and stepped outside our shack. Some of us cried, others laughed, and still others did neither, too stunned to express any emotion. What to do next?

Where do we go from here? The questions and the dilemmas were endless. We dared to feel like free men, free from our oppressors. Yet we could not afford the luxury of complete acceptance of our freedom. The circumstances were still too unclear, too tenuous.

As the afternoon approached, so did the avante guard of the Russian Army. It was an unforgettable sight to behold...this entry of the "great" army of the liberator: horse-drawn wagons occupied by soldiers holding a gun in one hand and what appeared to be a bottle of vodka in the other moving in our direction. The wagons came sporadically, several at a time. Minutes later, more would follow. Once I noticed that a soldier fell off the wagon into the road, the bottle still in his hand. The wagon proceeded, leaving the soldier behind. I could not help but wonder how this loose contingent of soldiers could have beaten the highly-motorized German army. Regardless of these speculations, we all hoped that the Russians would perceive us as allies in the struggle against the Germans.

We soon saw masses of people on the horizon approaching from the distance. As they moved closer, they appeared like a human wall. Unsure of what to expect and wary of the identities of these masses of people, we decided to move to a higher location in "our quarry" to assess this new development. It didn't take long before we were faced with a wave of thousands of German regular military prisoners, escorted by a few Russian soldiers on either side of

the road. As they passed, I studied their faces. Some reflected apathy; others reflected fear. All were starving. Many were barefoot, wearing shredded clothes. It was a pathetic sight to behold.

This situation presented an inexplicable emotional dilemma for me. On the one hand, I should have felt great satisfaction to see my oppressors humiliated and degraded. On the other hand, my inherent compassion for human suffering triggered a great degree of sympathy. I accepted, at that moment, the pain of my oppressed oppressors. In a way I felt guilt about betraying my own people with these feelings, when only revenge should have ruled my feelings. Certainly at that moment, it appeared to me that the German prisoners' sufferings were greater than my own. I did not share these feelings with anyone else. Nevertheless, I now firmly believe that others in our group may well have experienced similar conflict. Since this was such a volatile mixture of emotions, silence seemed the best way to handle such ambivalence, and so I spoke to no one about my confusion.

After many hours of watching this parade of prisoners, we decided to leave "our quarry" and head for the road. We took our meager possessions, some leftover food, and our tattered clothes and left the camp as free men. As we walked towards the next village, my thoughts centered on my return to Moghilev, where I had last seen my family. I was trying to construct a plan to get there when a surprising development occurred. We were approached by a group of

Ukrainians on horse-drawn wagons who offered to take us in their wagons to Moghilev. These were the same villagers who had so willingly collaborated with the Germans. Now they approached us, apparently seeking to create good will, realizing that since they had lost the protection of the German soldiers, their position was precarious, at best. Afraid of being caught by the Russian troops, they believed that having us with them would prove that they were not Russian enemies. They even offered to share their food. We were instantly transformed into valued protectors! What a reversal of fortune!

Truthfully, we were afraid to trust them, these same people who would gladly have killed us just days before. Yet what choice did we have? We did not have the stamina to walk all the way to Moghilev in our weakened condition. Nor were we even sure which way to go. Eventually, we would have to trust someone. So we decided to accept their offer, rationalizing that their tenuous situation would offer us some degree of safety. Yet we did not trust them blindly. We were prepared to fight them if they tried to harm us in any way. Before leaving the quarry, we had concealed some of the smaller tools, such as hammers, in our belongings, to be used as weapons if necessary.

We divided into groups of six or seven per wagon. We stayed off the main roads, traveling over side roads through forests. Neither they nor we were eager to encounter Russian troops. As we drove without sign of trouble, we began to feel more comfortable entrusting our lives to our drivers. I prayed to G-d for help

to survive the journey and to find my family alive. Again I drew strength from the blessing my father had received from the Shotzer Ruv. Again I held on to this blessing as a child would hold on to the hand of a protective father. With our approach to Moghilev, fear for my own safety diminished, only to be replaced with a mixture of anxiety and excitement at the prospect of possibly finding my family.

Family Reunion

I could feel my heartbeat quicken as we approached our destination. A full day after our departure from the quarry, we arrived in Moghilev. Anticipating the possibilities of the outcome of this journey created a tremendous strain on me. I gathered all my energy and immediately began searching for my family.

The scene was chaotic. The streets were teeming with people frantically seeking family and friends. Like the others, I went from person to person, asking if anyone had seen my family. Finally, I was directed to a building called "Turnatoria" , an old armament factory during W.W.I. When I arrived, I saw hundreds of refugees lying or sitting on the floor. Others were walking around, desperate to find a familiar face. Overcome with exhaustion, anxiety, and the realization of the tremendous task ahead of me, I finally sat down in a corner of this bedlam to rest. I soon fell into deep sleep, completely spent of energy.

When I awoke, I continued to search, but to no avail. Finding none of my family, I finally left the building and returned to the street. Out of nowhere I heard a voice call my name. Someone recognized me and told me that he had just seen my brother, Marcel. I was so excited that I raced to the old school building where he had seen Marcel. Knowing that some of my family was here and alive renewed my strength.

Then came the moment which I had longed for. There he was, standing in the street, talking to someone! When I walked over to him, Marcel, stunned, stopped talking. We were unable to say anything at first. My brother was really alive! Our reunion was filled with tears and smiles, hugging and kissing. Neither of us could talk. After we regained our composure, Marcel told me that Papa, Mutti and Inge also were safe in the "Turnatoria". We ran back together. I could not understand how I had missed them in my earlier search.

As we looked at each other for the first time in years, we could hardly speak. Mutti, Papa and Marcel had managed to stay relatively healthy, although all had lost much weight. When I first saw Inge, however, I was shocked. She had been sick with typhus and as a result, she had lost all of her hair and had become skeleton thin. Conscious of the toll the past years had taken on me, I also wondered how I looked to them.

After hugging and kissing each other and crying with joy and relief, we slowly began to share our stories of what had happened to us during our two and a half years of separation. We kept interrupting each other and ourselves with questions and exclamations, stopping often to thank G-d for our good fortune. We had survived. It was truly a miracle for almost an entire family to survive under the incredible conditions of illnesses, filth, starvation and demoralization which had claimed the lives of millions of our fellow Jews.

It was commonly believed that had it not been for Siegfried Yaegendorf, none of the Jews of Moghilev would have survived. He was truly a hero, having saved thousands of Jewish lives, including those of my family, by recruiting them to work on the projects he developed. After receiving the necessary permission from the Romanian and German Commandants to use Jewish labor to rebuild the city, he provided work permits for all those willing to work for him. These work permits became life savers because anyone with a work permit from Yaegendorf was automatically exempt from the frequent demands for work crews by the German Military Command. Those Jews who were sent to the German work crews never returned.

When Yaegendorf realized what was happening, he developed a plan to save even more Jews by transferring work documents from those who died while under his jurisdiction, to others who did not have Romanian work permits. By transferring these documents, he saved countless additional Jewish lives. Additionally, Yaegendorf added extra members to families issued work permits. These new family members took on the identity of their adopted families, thereby avoiding the German work crews. When my family was issued their work permits, two additional people joined their ranks as adopted Wagners.

During this time, a typhus epidemic spread through Moghilev. Poor sanitary conditions, overcrowding and poor nutrition contributed to its devastating toll. The epidemic was finally quelled as a result of the fear by the German and

Romanian Military Command that the disease would spread to the military and civilian populations. To protect the military and civilian personnel, they ordered emergency delivery of medication and sanitary supplies to the area. These supplies were made available to everyone, including Jews.

During their time in Moghilev, my parents, Marcel and Inge lived in an old school house which they shared with some other families. Papa worked in one of Yaegendorf's warehouses. Marcel split his time, working alternately in a warehouse and a nail factory. Mutti and Inge worked in the kitchen as well as the laundry.

After I joined my family, Yaegendorf and his staff provided us with ample food and supplies until our instructions arrived, permitting our return to Czernowitz. Rumors abounded, but the atmosphere was one of hope and optimism.

Return to Czernowitz

Late in 1944, the Russian and Romanian authorities came to an agreement with the government in Bucharest to send trains to Ataki. These trains were to bring the survivors of all the camps in that area to Czernowitz. When our turn came to board the train, we were treated with dignity and respect. We had wooden benches to sit on, and there were toilets and sinks in each car. We were all undernourished and in poor physical and emotional condition, yet we experienced a tremendous emotional revival. The contrast between this journey back to civilization and the transport which had brought us to this hell was overwhelming.

Despite the relative comfort of our accommodations, the train ride seemed endless. The eighteen hours felt more like eighteen days. We were so eager to begin to live again. Although we were euphoric in our newly-found freedom, we still felt some trepidation because Czernowitz was still under Russian occupation. Just as they had throughout our ordeal, Papa and Mutti inspired our confidence with their belief that we were truly returning to a "normal" life, a life of freedom and opportunity.

When our train finally arrived at the station in Czernowitz, we looked like a stereotypical picture of a refugee family. Uncertain, disheveled, cold and hungry, we sat amongst our meager belongings on a horse-drawn cart which we had

hired to take us to our destination. Strada Nicolas #5 was the same house from which we had been deported three years earlier. Miraculously, our former home was unoccupied. Although the house had obviously been looted and contained only a few odd pieces of furniture, it was still wonderful to return to familiar surroundings.

The war in Romania was still going on, but the fighting had stopped in the city of Czernowitz. Scars of war were evident everywhere. Russian military personnel as well as civilians took possession of abandoned homes and other property. The daily return of survivors, huddled together in silence, created an atmosphere of skepticism mixed with hope. Skepticism was caused by the uncertainty of the Russians' plans. Hope stemmed from the prospect of making a brighter future. Rumors were spreading that those who wished to be repatriated to the place of their birth would be permitted to do so. Other rumors, however, suggested that the Russians, who needed more men for the front lines, were going to search every home for eligible men. All able- bodied men would be immediately drafted. No one knew what to believe.

Thus, after all we had survived, we were still not yet truly free to determine our future. With the realization that dangers continued to lurk in unsuspected places came the heavy burden of not knowing what might happen next. Once again life centered around the local Piatza, the very same one where, just three years before, we had heard our names called to announce our deportation. Each

morning people congregated to learn of new ordinances and edicts issued by the local and central government authorities. It felt so familiar and so frightening. The only difference was that this time, the proclamations were printed in Russian.

Although we were grateful that the Russians had liberated us from the Nazis and had returned us to Czernowitz, we were seeing their heartlessness or, at best, their desperation as they collected our survivors and shipped them to the Russian front to fight the war. We were terrified of the very same people who so recently had saved our lives. Such were the volatile transformations of war.

One morning, with the help of those who understood Russian and were able to translate that day's edict, we learned that registration for repatriation, would soon begin. This prospect provoked endless discussions within my family and among all those who had returned from Moghilev, as we weighed the advantages and disadvantages of registering with the Russian government. Registration could work for or against us.

What risk were we exposing ourselves to by providing them with our names? Although we all shared the same strong desire to leave Russia, we were equally terrified to expose this desire. We were afraid that if we declared our intentions for repatriation, we would appear ungrateful, be considered undesirables, and perhaps be deported to Siberia. If we decided not to register for repatriation and

the Russian intentions were sincere, we might miss our only chance to leave Russia. After long debate, we decided to register.

Five long weeks of waiting, of sleepless nights and endless discussions about the validity of our choice, came to an end when an ordinance appeared, instructing all those who had registered for repatriation to assemble in the Piatza. We were to congregate on a specified day in the middle of May at 7:00 in the morning. Each person was allowed only one piece of luggage. This time, the one bag limit did not create a problem. Everything we owned easily fit.

As the departure date approached, we became increasingly tense, afraid to think of the possibility that the trucks could take us to our doom as easily as they could take us to our freedom. We appealed to G-d for protection and guidance. I remember the night before our departure clearly: Papa went into seclusion for hours to pray.

After a very long and almost unbearable night, we headed to the Piatza at 6:00 in the morning. By the time we arrived, 20 - 25 people were already assembled. At about 7:30 several military transport trucks appeared. On each truck were two Russian civilians, most likely political commissars. As they called out our names, we were instructed to climb onto the trucks and sit on long wooden benches along the sides. About thirty people filled each vehicle. As we sat waiting for the trucks to start rolling, we exchanged few words. We held each

other's hands in silence because we were so frightened. Again we were out of control; again our destiny was in the hands of others.

Finally, the trucks began to move. We soon noticed that we were turning in a southwest direction, towards the Romanian border. Suddenly pure joy replaced all of our tensions and fears, but well-groomed caution prevented us from openly displaying our feelings of relief.

About noon, we arrived outside a small, partially-destroyed desolate town named Dorohoi, on the border between Russia and Romania. All that remained of the town were some abandoned houses and sheds with partially-destroyed roofs. The only living creatures we saw were some skeletal stray dogs. We were told to disembark from the trucks with our meager belongings. When we disembarked, they left. We set about finding accommodations from among the abandoned buildings. All of us from our truck decided to stay together as a group and settled in one of the least damaged-looking buildings.

Our stay lasted about three days. During this time, we sent out scouting parties to locate food and water. My brother Marcel was one of the scouts. He was able to beg for some vegetables, fruit and bread from a local peasant who took pity on us. We had brought some food with us when we left Czernowitz, and with this as a supplement, we were able to survive. We all shared everything we could scrounge.

Our hopes to finally return to freedom gave us the strength to live through those terrible days in Dorohoi. On the morning of the third day, we were told to gather our belongings and walk towards the Romanian border. After walking across fields for about one and one half hours, we could see, in the distance, some people pacing back and forth. As we came nearer, we saw they were soldiers from the Romanian border police. We passed through the border without incident. To our complete surprise, we were greeted on the Romanian side by a delegation of representatives from the American Joint Distribution Committee. Angels from heaven never looked more beautiful.

These wonderful people met us with clothing, food and money, showing us for the first time in so many years, that good people still existed on earth, people who cared for us. We were overcome with emotion. We began kissing and hugging them, and they us. We felt that they were not merely mortals from America, but divine messengers. I can still remember Papa stretching his arms up toward heaven, thanking the Almighty for yet another miracle.

Once our emotions began to settle down, we were ready to leave. Trucks provided by the American Joint Distribution Committee were waiting to take us anywhere in Romania that we wanted to go. Our chosen destination was Bacau, a fairly large city in Moldova. On our arrival we were given a small

apartment with some furniture, enough to give us a level of comfort which we had not even dared to dream about for many years.

It was here in Bacau that we heard the announcement of the surrender of the German army to the Allied forces. I can still remember that day vividly. We had already felt free of the claws of Hitler's war machine the day that we left "our" stone quarry. But to hear the official news of the defeat of our enemy gave us a feeling of redemption.

A sense of complete freedom decended on us. I was now able to foresee a future in my beloved field of music. I did not waste any time making contacts in musical circles. Within a short time, I was offered a teaching position at the music conservatory in Bacau and I became the most sought-after violin teacher in the school. The school board director, Mr. Bromfeld, as well as the director of the school, Mr. Koffler, were impressed with my teaching methods. They offered to lend me a fine violin, which I embraced with great enthusiasm. I examined this instrument very carefully, holding it hungrily, as I realized that four years had passed since I last held my own violin. Tearfully, I wondered what had happened to my precious instrument. As I stood holding their offering, however, I realized that I must now concentrate only on the future.

My days now were filled with teaching eager students from early in the morning until late in the evening. After I returned home, I practiced for long hours. Gradually, I noticed improvement in my violin playing. Often, I would fall into bed at night so tired that I could not even eat supper, yet I was incredibly happy and fulfilled. I had found my way back to the world of music and spent each day doing what I loved best. I felt reborn.

In addition to my teaching duties, I participated in many concerts and musical lectures which took me to various other cities in Romania, including an unforgettable trip to the city of Brasov in Transylvania. These visits were sponsored by A.R.L.U. S., the Russian -Romanian cultural umbrella organization, which sponsored an experimental educational program designed to introduce the public to the structure of musical composition through live musical demonstrations. This program became a tremendous success, and my sense of purpose was completely revived.

Marcel and I often would perform together, traveling to the concerts in open trucks during the night. Even in the summer, the nights in Transylvania get very cold. By the time we arrived at our destination, we often were frozen. However, when we stepped on to the stage and saw an enormous concert auditorium filled with many hundreds of people, our hearts were warmed. In spite of our exhausted and frozen condition, the concerts were invariably successful. Our

sense of pride and self-worth were renewed as we, once again, were appreciated for what we contributed to society.

On one occasion, I had the pleasure of being introduced to one of the musical geniuses of that period, George Enescu. After attending an absolutely magnificent performance of his in Bacau, I was invited to a reception in his honor. He was a very sick old man, with a serious back problem that caused his upper body to bend forward. Yet in spite of his obvious disability, he was a remarkable musician. What an honor and delight it was to have met him!

With time, the Russian influence and ideology crept into every aspect of daily life in Bacau. After many family deliberations, we decided that it was time to move on. This time the decision to move was ours and ours alone. No one was persecuting us. Although we had been afforded a comfortable life and relative freedom and security, we had lived under Russian rule before and knew we did not want to remain living in that environment. As our new destination, I chose Arad, a fairly large city in the northwestern corner of the province of Transylvania. I picked Arad because of its proximity to the border with Hungary, the closest city to Romania that was not under Russian influence.

Before leaving Bacau for Arad, I resigned my position with the music conservatory. Returning the violin to Mr. Koffler, I expressed my gratitude for the

school's help in reintegrating me to the world of music. Mr. Koffler offered to provide me with letters of recommendation, which I gratefully accepted.

When we arrived in Arad in the spring of 1946, I had these excellent recommendations for teaching positions with me. I decided, however, that it would be better to take on private students instead. One of my students was the young son of a prominent attorney in town. I explained to him that I was unable to demonstrate the teaching lessons on his son's child-sized instrument. Together we came up with an arrangement that in exchange for lessons, the father would give me his violin, one which he had played in past years. When I explained that my stay in Arad was temporary because I was planning to leave Eastern Europe, the father agreed to let me keep the violin regardless of how long I remained there. In the end, I returned the violin before we left, but I was grateful for the use of it while I was in Arad.

Eager to be independent yet close, while in Arad, Marcel and I each rented a room in the same neighborhood where Inge and my parents were living. I shared my room with a young man named David, who had been a Yeshiva student. Our landlady, a warm and gentle person, was an elderly Christian woman named Mrs. Arradine. I believe that if she could have, she would have adopted me. Already in her seventies, she was most kind and sympathetic. She would prepare special Hungarian foods for me with the idea of "fattening me up", since my weight had dropped below one hundred pounds. Each night she would

wait for me to come home from teaching. We would have dinner together, and she would ask me about all the details of my day. She really loved me, and I, in return, thought she was wonderful. As time passed, and with an increasing number of warm human interactions, my faith in basic human goodness and my ability to trust my fellow man were renewed.

David was involved in black market dealings, traveling continuously. He traded food products from Arad for gold coins from Budapest, which at that time had a terrible food shortage. Through David, we made contact with the Bricha, a group of young Israelis who helped Jews escape from Eastern Europe to Israel. The first step in that dangerous and complicated operation was to help fleeing Jews cross the border from Romania into Hungary. Once on Hungarian soil, the émigrés were met by the American Joint Distribution Committee.

We had endured a long odyssey under totalitarian regimes. With our arrival in Arad, we could finally imagine that our suffering would come to an end. The goal of living in freedom became realistic. For the first time, I allowed myself to feel the heady excitement that only one who is truly free can experience.

Even though we did not yet have concrete plans about how to get out of Eastern Europe, our final destination became America. We knew that Mama had relatives in the United States in Philadelphia, but the only information which we had about them was their names, the Rosners and the Burgs. As the days and

nights passed, the possibility of achieving this goal gained greater momentum, as did our excited anticipation of crossing the border to freedom.

After months of negotiations through David with the Bricha, the date of our departure from Romania was finally set. The fateful day arrived, and we were advised to be ready at 1:00 AM. It was a hot night in August when a truck pulled up in front of Mrs. Arradine's house, where Papa, Mutti, Marcel, Inge and I had assembled. Mrs. Arradine escorted me outside; I was holding a small suitcase, she carried a little hurricane lamp in her hand. We embraced, and with tears running down her cheeks she said " Max, I'm sure that you'll get to America and be very successful." I said "good-bye" to one of the finest, most compassionate people I ever had the pleasure of knowing.

We traveled by truck for about one and a half hours. When we reached a wooded area the truck stopped. As we got off, we were met by an Israeli guide who took us on a short walk of about half a kilometer. We had to be silent and move very quickly. Suddenly our guide turned to us and told us we were on Hungarian soil. We were free!! We were so elated that we began to cry. The planning and execution of our escape had been flawless. It was almost too easy! We were finally free!

A small bus was waiting to take us to Budapest. As excited as we were at the prospect of being on Hungarian soil, we had to remember, however, that we

were there illegally. We had no entry visas, no documents allowing us to stay. Had we been discovered, we could have been deported. There was no time to lose. We were immediately whisked to the main train station in Budapest, where delegates from The American Joint Distribution Committee greeted us warmly. They escorted us to the Orient Express and supplied us with identity papers declaring us to be stateless refugees. They also gave us train tickets to Vienna, food, money and lots of hugs and kisses. This was the emotional climax of our escape from Romania.

We settled into our seats in our comfortable private compartment and the train began to move out of the station. Once again, Papa raised his hands towards heaven and with tears streaming down his cheeks, thanked G-d. Now, for the first time in so many years, we felt truly free, traveling where we wanted to go, doing what we wanted to do.

As we approached the Austrian border, we felt our anxiety level rise. Past experience had taught us that contact with uniformed personnel invariably was fraught with danger. For this reason, even though the documents provided to us by the American Joint Distribution Committee were designed to protect us, we were understandably nervous.

The train stopped at the border between Hungary and Austria. First Hungarian border police entered our compartment to check our papers, followed by the

Austrian border police. What a relief when, without incident, we were allowed to continue our journey to Vienna.

Before the war, Vienna had been one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. It was a center of culture filled with great musicians, composers and poets, all of whom left their indelible marks. But when we arrived in the fall of 1946, the physical devastation of the war was evident everywhere. We made our way to a refugee center in a mid-sized building, which at one time had been a private home. There we found refugees from all of Eastern Europe crowded into rooms and spilling over into hallways. Luggage was strewn everywhere. As we moved through the building to the registration area, we had to step over bags, luggage and even people.

Finally, we completed the long, arduous process of registering for papers which would allow us to emigrate to the United States. Then we were assigned to a small room of the house. This space served both as our sleeping area and as storage for our belongings. In addition, we were provided with some money and, most importantly, some advice. While discussing our plans to go to America with the people from the refugee center, I learned that a close friend of mine from Czernowitz, Leo Retter, was in charge of all the refugees in Munich. I felt certain that he would be able to help facilitate our travels to America; therefore, we decided that our next destination should be Munich.

The refugee officer promised us assistance and told us that it might take several weeks before the travel plans to Munich could be finalized. We took advantage of this time to see Vienna and to mingle with the Viennese people. We found, to our dismay, that as refugees we were shunned. Our appearance unmistakably identified our social status. When we walked into a store, we were ignored by the shopkeepers. When we walked down the street, the local people kept their distance, circling around us to avoid any possible contact. No wonder. Hitler, an Austrian by birth, was one of their sons.

Finally the day came when we were called to the Joint Distribution Committee office and were told that our trip to Munich was arranged. The Joint provided us with train tickets, more money, and good wishes. We packed our few belongings and quickly made our way to the train station before anything could possibly happen to change these plans.

At that time, Austria was divided into four zones of occupation by the Allied forces: United States, Great Britain, France and Russia each controlled a designated area. Vienna, the capital of Austria, was also divided into four zones of occupation, even though it was completely contained within the Russian zone of Austria. Guards were posted at each zone border, with signs announcing the change in zone occupation. The refugee center was in the American zone of Vienna.

The refugee center personnel soon informed us that as trains left the Russian zone, Russian Military Police would inspect them. All passengers' papers would be checked. We were further advised that in the past, some very dramatic situations had developed, and passengers had been forcibly removed from trains. Armed with only our documents from the Joint Distribution Committee and our wits, we again were extremely tense as the train arrived at the checkpoint and the Russian soldiers boarded. We knew that as stateless refugees, no government would stand behind us for protection. Again we were at the mercy of anyone with authority.

We reasoned that it would be in our best interest if we would appear calm. We knew from prior contact with Russian soldiers that they were great music lovers and a particular national favorite was the music of Johann Strauss. We planned a strategy that we hoped would help us in case our papers would not find favor with the soldiers.

This is how we set the scene. Marcel had with him a partitur (detailed orchestration of a composition) of Johann Strauss. He opened up this music and appeared to be studying it as the soldiers approached our compartment. We hoped that this would distract them.

As they entered our compartment, we saw that they noticed the props which we had arranged. They immediately engaged us in a discussion about music. They

appeared visibly excited to talk to us, mixing Russian and German in the conversation. After spending some time with us, they said "good-bye" and they left. We realized that they had not even checked our travel documents. Our plan had worked!

When the train finally started again we continued our journey to Munich. Greatly relieved and proud of our scheme, we burst out laughing. It was a therapeutic laugh, growing and growing, cleansing us of all the pent-up tensions that we had felt over so many years. With this laughter, we felt as if we were rejoining the human race. This was the first normal feeling and reaction that we had experienced in such a long time. Imagine that! We manipulated a situation and caused other people to respond exactly as we planned. We had passed the test of independence.

The train was chugging along at a tremendous speed, and so were our heartbeats. Although we knew that America was oceans and continents away, we felt closer to the fulfillment of our dream. Surely life in America, with the freedom it represented, had been a dream of many Holocaust survivors. But now, for us, this was more than a dream; it was becoming a reality within our reach.

Map relates to text pages 92 – 108.

Return to Germany

On a cold rainy night in late September, 1946, we reached Munich. A taxi took us from the train station to a very modest, small hotel. We didn't even unpack when we arrived, so sure were we that this was just a temporary stopover on our journey. Next morning, we registered at the Jewish Refugee Organization. There, we were assigned to two rooms in a large rooming house on Ohmstrasse. Frau Hintermeier, our landlady, was a short, fat woman with a very good-natured disposition. The house was filled with many refugees. One boarder was an elderly, single gentleman who had been a gynecologist in Vienna. Herr Krakauer, another boarder, was a chain smoker. When we walked into his room, we were amazed at the blue haze of smoke hanging in the air. An accomplished pianist from Poland, he was thrilled to meet others with a similar classical music background. He invited us to a private recital which he was giving in a nearby building. It was an impressive performance. As our friendship grew, I learned that Herr Krakauer also intended to emigrate to America. Regrettably, when we eventually left this way station on our trek to America, we lost contact with each other.

My first priority in Munich was to find my friend from Czernowitz, Leo Retter. We had a warm reunion, filled with reminiscences about our good times in Czernowitz before the war. In response to our discussion about my family's plans to emigrate to America, Leo suggested that we remain in Munich until the

final leg of our travel plans could be arranged. Promising to do everything in his power to assist us, Leo began by arranging an interview for me with the Department of Immigration of the American Joint Distribution Committee. Although I professed great knowledge of English at that time, the truth was that it had been many years since I had actually spoken the King's English of my high school days. Instead, during those intervening years, I had found it necessary to learn and master Romanian. Needless to say, I needed a crash course to brush up on my rusty skills and Americanize the English that I had learned so long ago. Fluent in English, Leo became my coach.

My job at the immigration department for the American Joint Distribution Committee was my first chance to work with Americans. I was given a uniform to wear and provided with clothing and food rations for my whole family. I started working in a file room, handling documents. After just a few weeks, I began to communicate comfortably with my American co-workers. Through this experience, I realized the amazing capacity of the sub-conscious to access information learned so many years earlier. In a very short time, I became fully fluent in English.

Bureaucracies tend to move slowly. After close to a year, my family and I were still in Munich, and I was still working for the American Joint Distribution Committee. By this time, however, I was transferred to a position in which I

interviewed refugees, handled their documents and assisted them through the maze of paper work and meetings.

One of my duties was to deliver official documents to the International Refugee Organization and to the office of the American Immigration Department. To accomplish this, I was provided with a small Jeep-type vehicle. No one at the American Joint Distribution Committee offices realized that I had never driven anything in my life. I certainly did not want to break this news to them and jeopardize my comfortable position. So, I got behind the wheel and drove.

That first trip was memorable. Having watched others drive for many years, I had a basic idea about what to do. However, I had no idea how difficult it was to drive in a straight line. My hands clenched the wheel tightly as I very carefully maneuvered the Jeep down the road. After all I had been through, I wasn't scared, but maneuvering the vehicle was a challenge. Still, it didn't take long before I mastered driving.

Although my job was satisfying, Munich was a very depressing city. Entire sections of the city had been bombed out and reduced to rubble. On some level, I must confess, this was not at all disturbing to me. I felt no sympathy for the Germans after all my family, friends and I had suffered and witnessed. Dachau, a suburb of Munich, was the site of a concentration camp where tens of thousands of Jews and others had been tortured and murdered. Despite the

screams of human suffering and odors of burning flesh, no one in Munich claimed to have any knowledge of what had happened there. I was appalled that in the face of evidence so obvious, the city's German residents continued to deny the atrocities that took place, while the Nazi officials, themselves, took great pride in the comprehensive documentation of the horrors which took place in the concentration camps.

This denial was not the only indication that the Germans had not learned their lessons from their defeat in the war. The atmosphere remained glaringly hostile to anyone who was not Aryan. One day, as I was entering a very crowded trolley car wearing my uniform from work, a fight broke out. It appeared that a Jewish man who had been seated on the trolley car noticed a German woman who was standing. In an effort to be chivalrous, the man got up so that the woman could sit down. In the process of standing up, he accidentally nudged a German man with his elbow. The German man began to punch him, yelling, "Dirty Jew!" The trolley car stopped at an intersection where a policeman was directing traffic. I immediately jumped off the trolley car and ran to the policeman, asking for help. Although I repeated my request in German several times, the policeman turned his back to me and walked away.

Another day I went to Augsburg on a mission. Since my uniform was American, people assumed that I was American, too. I traveled by train and was shocked to hear the Germans curse the Americans in German, thinking that I could not

understand what they were saying. While in Augsburg, I had some free time and decided to go to see a movie. The performance that day was a German documentary, including film of the concentration camps and of the Nurenberg trials. I was appalled when, after all the documentation was presented, the Germans in the theater stood up and began shouting "*LUEGEN, LUEGEN*" (lies, lies) and then left the theater *en masse*. How could they deny the murder of millions of men, women and children by their own brothers and sisters? How could they deny the guilt? How could they deny their own meticulous documentation? How could they deny the truth?

Munich was also a beehive of black market activity amongst the refugees, most of whom were concentration camp survivors from Eastern Europe and from Greece. Since the prevailing prejudice against the refugees made legal employment virtually impossible, the black market allowed them to earn a living and survive. Black marketeers would sneak over the border of surrounding countries and transport goods plentiful in Germany to countries such as France and Belgium, where these goods were in great demand. The most common items to leave Germany this way were medications, especially crystalline insulin. In return, the black market runners would bring back into Germany many valuables such as gold coins and expensive watches. Those who actually left the country were hired by others to do the purchasing and make the deals for them. Needless to say, the smugglers were well-paid for taking such high risks.

Anyone caught by the border police would certainly be less likely to be allowed to emigrate to another country.

My family and I made the decision not to get involved with the black market in any way. The price of jeopardizing our goal of emigration to America was too high. I was fortunate to make a good living working for the American Joint Distribution Committee, enough to support my family's needs. After what we had endured, we now lived in relative comfort.

Working in the immigration department gave me access to inside information regarding many of the particulars of the application process. The Displaced Persons Act of Congress defined a displaced person as one who was forcibly taken from his original domicile and transported to another location during the war. Eligibility to register for immigration to the United States required that the displaced person be in the American Occupation Zone of West Berlin, West Germany or Austria by the specified date in December, 1945. I was very distressed to learn this rule because this date-specific regulation disqualified us for consideration for immigration under the Displaced Persons Act. We had not arrived in Munich until fall of 1946.

With time, many additional obstacles blocked our immigration to America. All refugees were required to undergo medical examinations to detect lung or eye diseases. These examinations were the source of some very dramatic and

wrenching scenes. If one member of the family was found to be medically unfit for immigration, families were faced with the painful choice of leaving one or more members behind, or staying together at the expense of their dreams of going to America. Usually families chose to stay together.

Furthermore, upon successful completion of the medical screening, all applicants were required to undergo a rigorous evaluation by the C. I. C. (Counter Intelligence Corps). The agents interviewing the applicants appeared to be much more interested in looking for Soviet affiliations rather than for Nazi connections. Since many Jewish survivors had been liberated by the Soviet Army, they were often much more vigorously interrogated than Ukrainians trying to vanish into America. Many of these Ukrainians were deserters of the Fifth Ukrainian Army under Soviet control who later became known Nazi collaborators. As a consequence of this discriminatory policy, a clandestine network was established to produce false documents for individuals not meeting all the requirements of immigration. These documents falsified identities and/or whereabouts during the war. Usually these documents hid forced service under Russian occupation after liberation, for fear that such service would be interpreted as acceptance of Communist ideology. In reality, the opposite reasoning by C. I. C. agents would have been more accurate. Refugees forced into service would certainly be more likely to reject Communist doctrine than accept it. But the agents had to function under strict quotas and, therefore,

needed some frame of reference by which to determine who should be allowed into the United States and who should not.

In 1947 President Harry Truman amended the Displaced Persons Act, extending the deadline for registration from December 1945 to December 1946. This was wonderful news for us, but one more potentially serious difficulty remained before we could complete the screening process.

Inge was seriously emotionally ill. She had obsessive-compulsive disorder which was manifested by almost continuous hand-washing, as if she were trying to wash off the dirt from Moghilev. This condition consumed her both physically and emotionally, bringing her to the brink of exhaustion. As she explained it to me, she felt an internal force destroying her, and she desperately wanted to put an end to it. I arranged for Inge to see the most prominent psychiatrists in Munich and Stuttgart. The prognosis was always the same. There was no cure. We decided that if the C.I.C. rejected Inge, none of us would go to America. We prayed and hoped that her condition would not be detected. For some unknown reason, there were times when Inge experienced some relief. But these periods were of short duration. When her condition recurred, Inge would become indescribably depressed, her silent suffering broken only by heart-wrenching crying. Helplessly, desperately, we watched her struggle against her compulsions.

Finally, my office received the official notice from the American Joint Distribution Committee European Headquarters in Paris authorizing us to begin registering refugees for immigration to the United States according to the new timeline. With this directive, I initiated the application process for my family.

How relieved we were when the medical examinations and C.I.C. interrogations were completed without incident! Still, we waited for almost two and a half years before receiving our papers for immigration even though we were among the first to receive clearance under the amended Displaced Persons Act of 1946 signed into law by President Truman. But our spirits remained high as we waited for the departure date. Papa was contentedly involved with synagogue activity; Mama and Ingrid were busy preparing everything for our journey; Marcel renewed piano practice with vigor; and I was enthusiastically guiding our progress in paperwork at the office. At last we could begin focusing on our future in America.

Life in America

On a beautiful May day in 1949 we were finally scheduled to leave Munich. Our train was filled with joyous people. The passengers were one happy family of several hundred immigrants traveling to an unknown future, filled with hope for a secure and better life.

After arriving in the port city of Bremen, we were taken to a transit camp run by the International Refugee Organization (IRO). Accommodations were quite comfortable. The camp consisted of many large buildings, each three or four stories high. Every family was assigned a room within one of the buildings. Men's and women's toilet and washing facilities were provided in each section of every floor. Meals were taken in a communal dining area. With its frenetic bustling of activity, the camp resembled a beehive.

We had plenty of time to tour the city of Bremen with its old and rich history. I was particularly impressed with the clock works in the main government building of the city. The clocks had many moving parts, including figurines coming and going at various times, as they performed for the entertainment of the observers. They were fascinating. Watching this spectacle, I realized how strange it was to find delight in such simple, coordinated, mechanical movements after all the horrors I had seen. Perhaps it was this very representation of order, harmony and playfulness which so engaged my imagination and soothed my soul.

Map relates to text beginning on page 118.

Suddenly, when our time came to be assigned an actual departure date, the immigration process screeched to a halt. The immigration officers in Bremen claimed that they had not yet received the official interpretation of the extended DP Act from Washington. Thus they were unsure whether we qualified under the new act. Frankfurt, which was the headquarters of the US Department of Immigration had to provide the Bremen authorities with the "official interpretation".

This delay was a tremendous setback, emotionally as well as physically. We were becoming increasingly concerned that Inge's obsessive hand-washing would be detected. Since all toilet and washing facilities were shared, we worried that with each passing day, the potential for discovery increased. Shortly after we received the news about this latest delay we, and another family from Berlin in the same situation, decided to pay for a courier to go to Frankfurt to obtain the necessary clearance from the authorities. We were prepared, by this point, to do almost anything to expedite the process.

After days of bureaucratic indecision fraught with anguish, Mutti, Papa, Inge and I were finally cleared. Although his clearance was assured, one of Marcel's papers had been lost. He would follow us about three weeks later when his papers came through.

Finally, on May 20, 1949, we boarded the military transport ship *General M. B. Stewart*. Mutti, Papa, Inge and I looked at each other and held hands as tears ran down our cheeks. We kept kissing and hugging for joy, not fully comprehending as we stepped onto the ship, that we were already standing on United States territory. We were overwhelmed.

To our surprise, the majority of immigrants on this transport were Ukrainians, most of whom technically were not entitled to the status of displaced persons and, therefore, to entry into the United States under the DP Act. After the war it was established that most of these Ukrainians were deserters of the Fifth Ukrainian Army. They had deserted at the beginning of the war, shifting allegiance from Russia to Germany. As a result, they were totally fluent in German.

The DP Act specified that for anyone to be classified as a "displaced person" the applicant must have been forcibly taken from his domicile, and transported, against his will to a concentration camp or prison camp. By law, DP status did not apply to those who voluntarily left their homeland and, therefore, the DP status did not apply to the majority of Ukrainians on our ship.
Selective enforcement of this policy was responsible for providing a life of freedom to thousands of German collaborators who not only took this same freedom away from the innocent victims of the Holocaust, but also were responsible for their murder. The Ukrainians who deserted to join the German

Army in 1941, in fact, were used by the Germans as HI-Wls, Hilfs Freiwillige (voluntary helpers) stationed behind the front lines. At times, their hateful murder of Jews even exceeded the degree of brutality exhibited by the Germans. The Ukrainians became the Germans' trusted allies.

Even though their right to passage to America was questionable at best, the Ukrainians could not refrain from the occasional anti-Semitic remarks. Their threatening presence was disturbing.

Because of my fluency in both English and German, I was selected to function as the official interpreter of the ship, translating instructions from the Captain and his crew into German. Each day I went up to the communications center of the ship and translated the announcements into German over the public address system.

The seas became rough after we passed through the channel between Dover and Calais. Few passengers were spared seasickness; even the sailors succumbed. Nevertheless, the intense anticipation of reaching the land of freedom and opportunity buoyed our spirits.

The most memorable moment of our voyage came when, in the early morning mist of May 30, 1949, the Statue of Liberty slowly emerged on the horizon. Overwhelming tears of joy flowed down my cheeks. I had lived to see what had

been only a dream! Overcome by a surge of emotions, I believed that nothing could go wrong from this moment on. These ten days at sea represented a virtual rebirth. As a baby is born from the waters of his mother's womb, so we were reborn from the waters of the sea to begin a new life in America.

Outside the New York Harbor, immigration officers boarded our ship, checked our documents, and asked many questions. After several hours, the ship proceeded into the harbor. As we stepped out onto firm American soil, I had a strong desire to kiss the ground, but that was physically impossible. We were literally swept away by hundreds of people. Delegates from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the American Red Cross, and the Joint Distribution Committee were waiting for us. From behind the fence which divided us from the people waiting on the outside, I noticed many people waving and gesticulating. We were sure that family from my mother's side were there, but did not know whom to look for or where to look. We were pushed along in the crowd until we finally heard loud voices calling our names. I cannot adequately explain how we felt upon receiving the warm welcome from our cousins, the Rosners and the Burgs. It was a union of families who had never met before, yet endless kissing, hugging and tears characterized our meeting. I am still moved by these memories; such tears of joy never run dry.

The Rosners and the Burgs came for us in a caravan of ten cars. First we went to the home of one of the Burgs, who lived in New York, where a lovely reception

had been prepared for us. Communication was relatively easy. My fluency in English again made me the official family translator. From there the rest of the family who lived in Philadelphia drove us home with them. That same day of our arrival, they made a big party for us. We were up until well after midnight, getting to know each other. After this celebration, Mutti, Papa, Inge and I had to split up so as not to be a burden to any one family. Living with different cousins in Philadelphia, we set about starting our new lives.

Izzy and Mary Burg decided that the highest priority for me was to learn to dress appropriately for America. They took me to a men's shop and bought me a complete wardrobe. The other cousins took the rest of my family shopping for clothing as well. Mutti and Inge were taken by the women, while Papa went with the men.

A few weeks later, when we were ready to set out on our own, the cousins rented an apartment for us in South Philadelphia and stocked it with all of the necessities including food and furniture. Mutti, Papa, Marcel, Inge, and I were reunited, living together again as an independent family.

South Philadelphia was bustling with activity and noise day and night. Summer nights were unbearably hot. At times it seemed as if the stifling air stood still, suffocating me. Although we kept our windows open, the only relief from the heat came from a small window fan. If we stood directly in front of it, we could

feel the air move. Since there was no respite until the early morning hours, most people sat outside on their front stoops until long past midnight, talking and singing loudly. The noise level rose remarkably on weekends, when the dance hall down the street blared loud dance music from Friday through Sunday evening. Long after midnight, as people began to trickle indoors, these sounds were replaced with the clatter of the trolley cars passing our house.

After two months of sleepless nights, we decided to look for a new apartment in a quieter neighborhood. I finally located a spacious flat in a section of Philadelphia called Strawberry Mansion. The neighborhood was predominantly Jewish, and a beautiful synagogue was within a block of the apartment. I knew that Papa, especially, would be happy about this change.

Moving day in August found us schlepping all of our belongings across town. Papa's first job was to affix the Mezuzah on the apartment's front door as we all watched and listened to the blessing chiming in with a resounding "Amen" at its conclusion. Marcel, however, decided it was time to live on his own. He found a furnished room with a piano in Center City. He was going to earn his living by teaching piano and playing in nightclubs.

Having settled the family into more suitable quarters, Papa immediately began exploring his employment options in Philadelphia. Papa believed that in order to make a living in a city, he first had to learn the layout, culture, and transportation

systems of that city. Without knowing any English, Papa learned his way around Philadelphia within a short time. Although Papa never got his driver's license in the United States, he was as familiar with every neighborhood as a taxi driver. His main form of transportation throughout the city was by foot. Papa walked everywhere and quickly became recognized and respected by those along his regular routes.

Since Papa believed that the best place for a Jewish immigrant to work was in a Jewish organization, he took a position as a fund raiser with the Lubavitch organization in Philadelphia. With his undiminished charm and integrity, Papa developed his own loyal clientele of benefactors, who regularly donated funds to the Lubavitch movement.

My father was an observant Jew. His employment with the Lubavitch movement was, therefore, congruent with his lifestyle. The circumstances of his life since he had left Berlin so many years before had only strengthened his belief in God and his commitment to our people. Papa was to continue raising money for the promotion of his beliefs until the day before he died in 1966.

Mama did not find life in the United States easy. Plagued by migraine headaches and severe depression, her life was not a happy one. Perhaps as a result of losing two children, and as a consequence of her life during the war, Mama had great difficulty with letting go of Marcel and me. She needed a great

deal of our attention. I visited with her often, trying to share the happy aspects of my life with her.

At the age of 33 I was faced with the daily challenges of starting a new life for myself. I was trying to catch up for so many agonizing, lost years while absorbing to the fullest the gift of freedom...of life itself. This new life inspired me to focus on the future with hope. At the same time, dealing with everyday life was difficult, because I was living in the shadow of the past, trying to forget the unforgettable.

I struggled with the dream of a musical career and the reality of supporting my family and myself. A new life immersed in music didn't seem to provide the economic stability that was so necessary. For a time, I tried to pursue both ambitions, but came to realize that it was just not possible. I concentrated on my sales career; however, I arranged to give music lessons on weekends. At the same time, I was practicing violin whenever possible. Miriam stills talks about my method of practicing. I would go through our house, up and down the stairs, from room to room (including the bathrooms) listening to the acoustics in each room. I was reliving my old practice habits.

During the next few years I found employment in Philadelphia, then in New York, and later back in Philadelphia. Wherever I lived, I supplemented my income with my true vocation, giving private violin lessons. My first job was working for the

Burgs in their knitting mill, Triangle Mills, in Philadelphia. My task was to help spread materials across the cutting table. They treated me well and paid me a fair wage. This work continued until one day I saw one of the cutters accidentally amputate the tip of his finger on a cutting machine. I realized that as a violinist, I was unwilling to take this occupational risk. I immediately set out on my own to find another job.

On one of my job searches, I happened upon a woman who was speaking in German. We struck up a conversation, and she offered me a job in her husband's cheese factory. Although she assured me that it was a job with a great future, after working there for only a few weeks, mostly in the freezer department, I decided that this job would not lead me toward any larger career. I could not imagine how brushing off worms from cheese wheels and then dipping the cheese into vats of melted wax could lead to professional heights.

Fortunately, about that time, I received a call from a friend of mine, David Greenspan, with whom I had worked in the Munich office of the American Joint Distribution Committee. He asked me to join him in New York, enticing me with the prospect of great possibilities. I left my job and family in Philadelphia and sought out yet another new beginning in New York.

When I arrived in New York, I rented a room from a German Jewish family on the West Side. I interviewed with the company where David was employed,

Grayson Robinson, a general merchandising company on Seventh Avenue, and was hired to work in the office of the General Manager. Impressed with my musical education, my new boss invited me to his home for dinner. After dinner he brought out a violin and asked me to play. I accepted and played a few bravura pieces while he accompanied me on the piano. What an exhilarating feeling to hold a fine quality violin again! My new boss was so impressed that he promised to try to find me a sponsor, so that I could devote my time to practicing instead of working in an office. Unfortunately, this was not to be. However, I was invited back on several additional occasions, and I relished the opportunity to perform.

At night and on weekends, I supplemented my income selling insurance after passing my New York State Insurance Licensure Examination. I was becoming Americanized. Since I had a strong background in English, language had not been a barrier for me. My social life also began to flourish. I joined the Biblioteque Francaise and, at the age of 33, I even began dating.

Life in New York was full of many interesting and sometimes surprising experiences. I often walked home after work, trying to save money by not paying carfare. On one such occasion, as I approached my apartment house, I was thrilled to hear the rich sounds of violin music drifting out of a window. It seemed to be coming from the first floor apartment directly across the hall from my room. I was convinced that such fine music could not be coming from an amateur.

When the music stopped, I knocked on the door hesitantly. A middle-aged woman opened it. After apologizing for intruding on their privacy, I explained that I was also a violinist, and I lived across the hall from them. The woman invited me inside and introduced me to her son, a young man who stood in the center of the room, his violin still in his hands. His name was Rubin Varga. As I extended my hand towards his and he towards mine, our hands missed. I realized that he was blind, and reached over to grasp his hand in mine.

This meeting was the beginning of a warm personal and professional relationship between us. I soon learned the story of Rubin's life from his mother. Born in Israel, Rubin, like the other young children in his neighborhood, liked to play outside. One day, while playing outside, he picked up something which he thought was a shiny little toy. In reality, that "toy" was an explosive, one of many placed there by the Arabs specifically for the purpose of harming whoever picked it up. The explosive went off, blinding Rubin. After exhausting the limited medical options in Israel, Rubin's mother took him to her native land of Hungary, in search of medical treatment which would restore his sight. Shortly after their arrival in Budapest, they were trapped by the arrival of the Nazis. Mrs. Varga also discovered that in Hungary, as was the case in Israel, there was no medical treatment available to restore Rubin's sight.

By that time Rubin, who was still a little boy, was already quite advanced in his musical education. Through contacts from friends, Rubin's mother arranged an

audition with Jenoe Hubay, a professor at the Academy of Music in Budapest and a well known concert violinist and composer. Hubay recognized great potential in Rubin and kept him under his wing, teaching him music and protecting him from the Nazis. From that time on, Rubin's mother played a vital role in his success. She became Rubin's "eyes", reading musical notes and notations to him. Rubin remained in Hungary until the end of World War II, studying under Hubay. After the war, he and his mother immigrated to the United States.

I visited with him very often after our initial meeting that fateful night. Rubin seemed very interested in my critique, which in most instances took the form of praise. A modest man, Rubin was consistently eager to improve his playing. He would frequently ask me to listen to two recordings of the same piece of music, one his and one a performance by one of the great masters such as Yehudi Menuhin, Jasha Heifetz, or Nathan Milstein. He refused to tell me which piece was played by whom. Rubin wanted an objective evaluation from me. Invariably, I would choose Rubin's piece over one of the other masters as the superior performance. I explained to Rubin that his music had a distinct quality. Richness of tone, warmth, sensitivity and a flawless technique placed his music in a class far above the others. The loss of his sight clearly had enhanced Rubin's auditory sensitivity, which exhibited itself in the extraordinary quality of his performance.

Our visits became a daily part of our routine. Often we exchanged technical ideas such as concepts regarding fingering of difficult passages; other times we chatted as any other good friends. These exchanges benefited both of us, from the social standpoint as well as from the musical standpoint, and I found myself looking forward to this special time together each day.

To be honest, my relationship with Rubin was peppered with mixed feelings of admiration and envy. I was thrilled to be a confidant of such an accomplished, acclaimed violinist, yet I also felt jealous of his talent and ability. At times, I was almost overwhelmed with envy of his extraordinary ability to play a nearly flawless rendition of every piece. I had been robbed of so many years of studying violin during the prime of my life, years that I could never retrieve, years that made it impossible for me to reach my musical aspirations.

Another one of the most surprising experiences of my life occurred one day while I was living in Manhattan. I was walking along Broadway, about to cross the street near a subway exit. I looked first to my left, and then to my right watching for a break in traffic so that I could cross the street. As I looked to the right, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed a young man coming out of the subway exit. He was like an apparition from the past. I was stunned to realize that this young man was Adi Freedman, a friend and former student of mine from Czernowitz. The last time I had seen Adi was in the Czernowitz Ghetto, in the summer of 1941. Neither of us knew that the other had survived. We were so overcome

with emotion when we saw each other that we immediately canceled our plans for the afternoon, and spent the remainder of the day together, talking endlessly. We reminisced about the past and marveled at our survival.

After escaping from a forced labor camp, Adi had made his way to Constanza, a port along the Black Sea in Romania. From there, he was fortunate to get on to the last ship leaving for Palestine, where he had learned the art of diamond cutting. Finally, with the help of an uncle in New York, he emigrated to the United States.

Adi and I saw each other frequently after that, often double dating. Our relationship continued until he moved to Chicago, where he was offered a position with Sears as their head diamond buyer. Regrettably, over the years, the distance between us interfered with our relationship, and we lost touch.

After living and working in Manhattan for a year, I returned to Philadelphia as a result of some serious problems that had developed between my family and the United States Department of Immigration. The immigration authorities had become aware of my sister Inge's psychiatric problems and had decided to deport her to Germany. Since leaving Romania, I had made all the connections and arrangements for our arrival to America, primarily because I was far more fluent in English than anyone else in the family. My family once again needed me, and I felt obliged to return to Philadelphia at once. After prolonged

negotiations and tremendous heartache for our whole family, and with the help of Mrs. Corens, an attorney who headed the HIAS, the case was finally dropped. Nevertheless, I decided to stay in Philadelphia to be easily available in case of another emergency.

Upon my return to Philadelphia, I decided to transfer my insurance sales skills and sat for the Pennsylvania State Insurance Licensure Examination. I believed that selling insurance at night and on weekends would free up my days to pursue my first love, teaching music. In retrospect, this decision turned out to be one of the most significant decisions of my whole life. Through one of the secretaries in the insurance agency for which I worked, I was to meet my future wife. I'm convinced that these decisions to move to Philadelphia and work for this particular insurance agency were predestined.

One day, I walked into the insurance agency office, and the secretary asked me whether I would like to meet a friend of hers, Miriam Zeitlin. After she described all of Miriam's virtues, I agreed to take her telephone number. A short time later, I called her. After several canceled dates, we finally met at the *Yiddishe Folk Shul*, where she taught. I arrived towards the end of the day and walked in to the school office. Miriam was standing there. When we looked at each other, we instantly seemed to recognize one another, although we had never met before. Wearing a lovely dress with a flared skirt, Miriam was radiant and beautiful.

I waited as Miriam finished her work, and we went for a walk together. After this meeting we went out quite regularly, going to the park, to concerts, to restaurants and to a variety of other places of shared interest. Wherever we went, we talked. Miriam was very interested in my past and was empathetic and understanding of the scars it had left on me. I kept assuring her that I wanted only to live in the future, not in the past. My focus was on building a new life here in America.

Miriam Zeitlin was not just another date. She was a warm, charming, highly educated and creative woman, full of compassion. Although I was almost eleven years her senior, our age difference was of no consequence. Miriam was deeply involved in Jewish education and an accomplished artist. A graduate of the Philadelphia Museum School of Art, she received acclaim from professors as well as from art connoisseurs wherever she exhibited her works. In addition, I admired her for her rare, analytical mind.

Our relationship, which endured some glitches, was sealed when, on December 27, 1953, we became husband and wife in a traditional Orthodox Jewish wedding ceremony. With our marriage we forged a bond, not only between ourselves, but also between our past and our future.

With limited funds, mostly from the generous gifts we received, we enjoyed a modest honeymoon in Atlantic City and New York City. After checking in at the Taft Hotel, we went window shopping on Fifth Avenue. The highlight of our trip to New York was seeing " *Die Fledermaus*" at the Metropolitan Opera on New Year's Eve. It was an unforgettable performance with Roberta Peters and Robert Merrill. Following the opera, we headed to Times Square to usher in the New Year, 1954.

As midnight approached, masses of people spewed forth from subways and side streets, turning Times Square into a sea of humanity. Within minutes, we were buffeted by waves of people until we finally made our way to shelter in an open doorway. Regrettably, this was quite an unpleasant, even frightening way to end such a magnificent evening. We pledged to each other never to return to Times Square on New Year's Eve.

Married Life

On January 2, 1954, we returned from our honeymoon to Philadelphia to set up our household in a second-floor apartment on Peach Street, in the Wynnefield section of Philadelphia, a solidly Jewish middle and upper middle class neighborhood. What we didn't realize was that the apartment backed on to train tracks, a fact which explained why the apartment was so reasonably priced. Our first night was a true "awakening". The trains maneuvered back and forth along the tracks, assembling and disassembling while loudspeakers blared instructions to the various crew members. That night we made the decision to move to a quieter apartment as soon as the lease expired. Soon, we found a third-floor apartment in the same section of Wynnefield, on 52nd Street. Miriam set up a beautiful, sparkling little apartment, putting the stamp of her personality in every corner. In these early years of our marriage, we moved several times from one apartment to another, taking with us our few meager belongings. With each move, we tried to improve our living conditions.

Soon I took a position as a sales representative for a lady's garment manufacturing company owned by the Oppenheimer family. This position entailed much travel. While I was on the road, Miriam continued with her career in Jewish education. My time at home was precious, especially because it was somewhat limited. Often I would stop in to spend a few moments with my parents and Inge on my way home from business trips. Occasionally, Miriam

and I would visit with them on weekends, but most weekends we reserved for spending time together.

In early 1956, after several unsuccessful attempts at having children, Miriam broke the unforgettable news to me that she was pregnant. I was going to be a father! Was it true? Were Miriam and I predestined to bring a new generation into this world? Was this the reason for my survival? I kept asking myself, "Why me?" when six million of my brothers and sisters did not get this chance. Was the *Shotzer Ruv* still looking after me and my future generations? I continued to believe so.

The excitement grew the closer we came to Miriam's due date. Dedicated as she was to her job at the school, Miriam worked almost until the hour before we had to race to the hospital. Finally, on November 30, 1956, at about eleven in the evening, we received a most precious gift from the Almighty. It was the first night of Hanukkah, and we celebrated with our own special miracle. The future had arrived.

Born six and a half weeks early, our little daughter was the most beautiful little girl I had ever seen. We gave her the name of Channah in Hebrew and Dianne in English, after both of my grandmothers, as is the custom of Ashkenazic Jews. She was our treasure. She developed rapidly and communicated at a very early age. At six months, she said her first clear word -- not "Mama" or "Dada", but

"more"; she wanted more to eat. A new world had opened for us. And with this new purpose came the awareness of our responsibility as parents.

To my delight, Miriam became a wonderful mother, devoting herself full time to raising Dianne. I was soon offered a new sales position with a major company, which I was glad to accept because we needed the increased income. Nevertheless, my promotion involved a significant increase in travel. Whenever possible, I managed to leave early in the morning and return very late that same evening, in order to spend as few nights away from home as possible.

Miriam and Dianne taught me the various duties that a father must learn, and I was an eager student. My favorite time with the baby was the late night feeding. This was our midnight rendezvous, when Dianne and I would have our heart to heart talks, just the two of us.

In the spring of 1957, we moved to a first floor apartment on Berks Street, one block away from our previous residence. What an improvement! Not only did we have much more space and a front garden to enjoy, but we no longer had to schlep the carriage and all the baby equipment up and down three flights of winding stairs. This new location was as close to Utopia as we could have imagined at the time.

But this period of bliss was not destined to last long. When Dianne was seven months old, a tragedy befell our family. My sister Inge, who had long suffered from obsessive-compulsive disorder, decided she could not tolerate this inescapable torture any longer. Since our arrival in America in 1949, Inge had been treated by a prominent psychiatrist, Dr. Winkleman. An elderly gentleman, Dr. Winkleman had great compassion for my sister and worked with her for almost six years without any monetary compensation. She was institutionalized in various hospitals on numerous occasions, but all medical and psychiatric treatments had failed. In fact, after one of her surgeries, she developed epilepsy. As her condition worsened, she unsuccessfully tried to end her life several times. These attempts at suicide all took place in my parents' small apartment. On each of these occasions, help arrived just in time.

The date was June 14, 1957. I vividly remember being in my little garden in front of my apartment with Miriam on a hot summer day, playing with Dianne. Suddenly, I saw Inge coming towards us. She took Dianne into her arms and kissed her, then embraced all of us. We had never seen Inge appear so peaceful and composed. But we could not have guessed the source of that serenity. We invited Inge to stay and visit with us, but Inge said she preferred to take a walk. That was the last time I saw my sister alive.

After Inge did not return home that evening, we became alarmed and called the police. Then we went out looking for Inge ourselves. We walked up and down

the streets and through the parks of Philadelphia and the adjacent suburbs, checking all the places that we knew she liked to frequent.

For two days and two nights we searched frantically. Finally, on the third day, we received a telephone call from the police. They had found a body matching Inge's description floating in the Schuylkill River. Apparently, after leaving our house, Inge walked down to the river and jumped in. Unable to swim, Inge put an end to her suffering the only way she could.

My cousin George Rosner took me to the city morgue to identify Inge's body. I sat in the waiting room, too distraught to identify her, while George accompanied the morgue attendant inside. As I waited, I stood up and began to pace, feeling too restless to remain seated. Just as I moved to the other side of the room, the entire ceiling fixture under which I had been seated just moments before came crashing down. I would surely have been killed if I had still been sitting in that chair. Was this another miracle?

Although I was grateful for my own rescue, it offered no comfort for the tremendous loss I felt as George came out and indicated that the body found by the police had indeed been Inge. How desperate she must have felt, my gentle, warm, beautiful, courageous, yet fragile sister! The war had brought Inge terrible, relentless suffering. The feelings of normality, comfort and contentment which were brought to the rest of us by our life in the "New World" eluded Ingrid.

Through the pall of sadness from our loss, Mutti, Papa, Marcel and I understood that Inge was finally at rest. We mourned not only her death, but also her tragic life, yet another victim of the Holocaust.

In 1960, we moved from our apartment into our first house on Arlington Street in Wynnefield. How beautiful life could be! Miriam and I were completely absorbed in our new surroundings. We painted and fixed up the house to make it ours. We had birthday parties and puppet shows with voices by Miriam and Max. We were happy, so happy that we decided to give Dianne a brother or sister.

On September 27, 1961, we were blessed again with our second daughter, whom we named Malka in Hebrew and Jacqueline in English, after Ingrid. She looked and acted like a little doll. As Jacki developed, she began to mimic and follow her older sister. Soon she proved to be a beautiful, bright and precocious child in her own right. By that time Dianne was five years old. A very intelligent child with an unusual depth of understanding even then, she was very eager to help take care of her new little sister.

As the children grew, my work obligated me to travel more extensively. I often had to stay away for several days at a time. My homecoming became a source of excitement. As I drove into the driveway of our home, I could hear the children yelling, "Daddy's home" as they raced to the front door. Dianne and

Jacki ran into me, almost knocking me over with hugs and kisses. I never came home empty-handed, always bringing a small gift for each of the girls.

Experiencing so many wonderful joys, I also have experienced the inevitable losses. One terrible loss occurred on February 26, 1966 after I returned from a business trip. Before going home to Miriam and the girls, I stopped to see my parents to wish them a "Good *Shabbos*". Both Papa and Mutti were in good spirits. Papa complained of feeling tired and apologized for not escorting me to the door, as was his custom. I wasn't too concerned, as he was, after all, an elderly man. I did not know then that this would be the last time I would see my father alive.

Papa previously had suffered from what had been assumed to be two minor heart attacks. Since there were no tests at that time to assess the true damage to his heart, Papa returned to limited work after only a few weeks of convalescence in each case. On Saturday February 26, 1966, after Papa returned home from synagogue and made *Kiddush*, the blessing over the wine, he told Mutti that he felt tired and was going to lie down for a while. As she often did, Mutti removed his shoes, but when she turned around to look at him, he was dead.

Since Papa had resumed his normal activities for so long, his death at this time was totally unexpected. Mutti called me, screaming frantically into the phone

that Papa had just died. I will never forget the panic I felt as I drove at breakneck speed, going through red lights, to be with my mother. Miriam arrived just a few minutes later.

When I arrived at my parents' apartment, I found Mutti sitting in a chair, crying with her head cradled in her hands. She kept repeating " What will I do now? Papa is dead."

In the meantime, Miriam tried to reach the doctor and Marcel. Both arrived shortly thereafter. Mutti later told me that she had tried to resuscitate Papa by breathing into his mouth, but was unsure of how to do this. The doctor told us that Papa had died from a massive heart attack and that her efforts would have been futile in any event. Papa died at 12:10 PM. That very day, February 26, 1966, was my fiftieth birthday. Miriam secretly had planned a surprise party for me that evening. Instead of celebrating with our friends and family, we spent the evening mourning with them.

After Papa's death, Mutti came to live with us for about two and one half years. Miriam's boundless generosity and compassion helped to ease the transition for Mutti into widowhood. During this time, Mutti developed a close relationship with each of my daughters, who proved to be a source of great joy in her life. Of course, mishaps are unavoidable. Fortunately, those involving Mutti were often humorous. On one occasion, when Mutti was baby-sitting with Jacki and

one of Jacki's girlfriends, someone accidentally hit the panic button for the burglar alarm, mistaking it for a light switch. As sirens blared and bells rang, there was a knock on the door. Upon opening the door, my flustered Mutti was confronted by two policemen, guns drawn and pointed at her. I'm not sure who was more surprised, Mutti or the police facing a little old Jewish lady "robber". After lots of explaining and some apologies, the police left, and life settled back down to normal.

In September 1968, the Brith Shalom organization opened an apartment building for senior citizens. Mutti was among the first to move in. She took advantage of many of the social activities which were offered, although a blanket of sadness seemed always to envelop her.

Mutti had devoted her life to taking care of all of us. Since Inge's needs were the most demanding, Mutti had spent much of her time with her. After Inge's death, and once Marcel and I were on our own, Mutti devoted herself to Papa. When Papa came home from work, Mutti always had dinner prepared for him and spent the evenings doing what she could to make Papa comfortable. She was a loving wife and mother, and I still miss her.

Mutti died in 1979, at the age of 83. The last five weeks of her life were spent in a coma in the hospital. Mutti only once appeared to come out of the coma. This was on February 26, 1979, when I was holding her hand and I mentioned that it

was my birthday. Mutti smiled at me then, for the last time. She died on the Hebrew anniversary of my father's death at exactly the same time, 12:10 PM. At that moment, as I watched her leave this world, an awesome thought came to my mind. Could Papa want her now, as much in death as he did in life? I believe to this day that their strong love for each other has continued to unite them in the next world.

In May, 1972, Miriam and I found ourselves on an El Al jet en route to Israel. We had decided that the time had come to visit our beloved homeland. Miriam's mother had graciously agreed to move into our house and care for Dianne and Jacki in our absence. As the plane taxied to the runway for takeoff, I began to marvel that only a few decades before, I was not even sure that I would survive to see the end of the war. Yet, here I was on a plane heading towards the land promised to my people in the Bible thousands of years ago. I would be walking in the very footsteps of both my Biblical ancestors and my present day heroes!

As we started our final descent into Ben Gurion Airport, the pilot announced that the coastline of Israel was visible from the windows of the plane. Upon hearing this announcement, the passengers broke into a spontaneous rendition of "*Hatikvah*", Israel's National Anthem. There wasn't a dry eye on the plane as we felt the bump of the wheels touching down on the runway.

After clearing through customs and immigration, I headed straight for a telephone. With some help, I finally figured out how to use the pay telephone system. A few minutes later I was talking to Uncle Herman and his wife, *Tante* Sabina! We arranged to see them at a later time, feeling a great need to wash and rest after our long trip. After arriving at our hotel in Tel Aviv, we barely had time to settle in when family started to descend on the hotel to welcome us. I had not seen some of our relatives in over forty years, because they had been wise to leave Europe before the War actually began. Others, who managed to escape from the Holocaust before the War's end, arrived in Israel after the war, having been detained in a displaced persons' camp in Cyprus. These reunions were the most memorable moments of this trip for me.

As we toured the sites, both ancient and modern, I couldn't help but marvel at the resiliency of our people and how much had been accomplished in such a short period of time. Israel was a country filled with immigrants whose whole lives had been uprooted and families destroyed. Yet, with a combination of ingenuity and tenacity, a homeland had been forged out of the desert to serve as a refuge for every Jew, a homeland built despite tremendous hostility as well as serious political, environmental and monetary obstacles.

Miriam and I spent two weeks traveling through Israel with a hired guide. Each experience contained both a spiritual and emotional component, which blended together to form an unforgettable trip. As our departure date approached, we

had very mixed emotions. Of course we were anxious to return to our beloved girls, yet we could not help but feel as if we were leaving our home. At that time we pledged to return the following year with the children. We wanted to give our children the same sense of a true homecoming that we had felt. In early summer, 1973, we fulfilled our commitment to Dianne and Jacki.

As we toured the sights with our children, we were all moved by emotional and spiritual stirrings. One incident stands out, however, as a link between my past and my new life. As we walked into *Mea Shearim*, a religious section of Jerusalem, I heard a voice calling, "Max Wagner!" from a distance. I looked up to see the source of this voice. I noticed a middle-aged man and woman approaching us from the other side of the street. The man walked directly up to Miriam and asked her, "Does Max still sleep with his arm like this?" As he asked, he reached up with his right arm and covered his eyes with the back of his forearm, palm pointed up. Miriam answered that indeed, I did. The man then identified himself as Bibi Geltner. Bibi and I had been "volunteered" to work together at "*Seifert's Waschanstalt*" (laundry) and were later prisoners in the same forced labor camp. We slept side by side on straw-covered wooden pallets for three years. Almost forty years had passed since we last saw each other. Neither of us had known whether the other had survived the end of the war. What a reunion! Bibi and his wife were living in a small village near Haifa. We visited them in their home and kept in touch for many years after that serendipitous meeting.

Miriam and I agreed on the importance of exposing our children to Jewish education from early on. Observance of Jewish customs and ceremonies at home was supplemented with synagogue attendance and an early start in the *Folk Shul*. As time went on, my daughters continued their Jewish education at synagogue Hebrew schools. Dianne continued with a university degree in Jewish Studies, while Jacki transferred to Akiba Hebrew Academy for most of her secondary education.

In addition to stressing the importance of Jewish tradition, Miriam and I focused a great deal of time and energy on encouraging our children's artistic creativity. Dianne and Jacki both learned how to play musical instruments. After an initial introduction to music via the piano, both girls moved on to learn other instruments. Dianne studied guitar, and Jacki studied violin. Jacki also demonstrated remarkable talent in fine arts. She received private art lessons which she then followed with a fine arts course of study in university.

Now my daughters are grown, happily married to men whom I love as my own sons. Such wonderful men! Dianne married Gary Sigman, and Jacki married Alan Routhenstein. I could not have asked for finer husbands for my daughters. Dianne, Jacki and their husbands have committed themselves and their families to perpetuate Jewish observance. They actively participate in synagogue life and have devoted themselves to sharing a Jewish life with their children. Miriam

and I are the proud grandparents of five grandchildren, Joshua, Ariella, Barak, Arik and Esti. All of them are currently enrolled in formal Jewish education. Joshua became a Bar Mitzvah on January 8, 1994 and was confirmed on June 12, 1997. Ariella and Barak have dates set for when they become a Bat and Bar Mitzvah respectively. As for Arik and Esti, the dates will be set when they become older.

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And so the generations of my family continue, yet the spiritual presence of the dead are with me at all times, especially that of my beloved Father. The night of March 15, 1989, 23 years after Papa's death, I had the following dream, all in German.

I was sitting in a concert hall when suddenly I heard a voice from behind me calling "Ingeschen", Papa's pet name for Ingrid. When I turned around, I saw Papa sitting a few rows behind me with some other men. I walked towards Papa, picked him up out of his seat, and carried him into the street. When I asked him if he could walk, he said "Yes". So I put him down and we walked together in a pouring rain. I asked him why he didn't come home instead of sleeping with those men. He didn't answer. I told him that I would take him home, bathe him and give him a clean pair of pajamas. He was poorly dressed. All I could see was his unbuttoned shirt and light coat. He also carried an unopened umbrella, which I opened to shield him from the rain.

I awoke from this dream with chills. Although I do not know how to interpret the details, I believe the dream expressed how much I missed my father and still wanted to protect him. My gratitude for the protection he so selflessly provided for us remains everlasting.

In 1983, I wrote to the *Rathaaus* (City Hall) of Berlin in an attempt to find documents pertaining to my father's business activities in Berlin prior to Hitler's rise to power. I received a reply containing vague information which was of little help. The letter which I received stated only that during the war and the subsequent Soviet occupation, many archives were destroyed or moved to unknown locations. For this reason, the documents which I requested were unavailable at that time.

The letter also extended an invitation for Miriam and me to come to Berlin as a guest of the city, since I was considered a "native son". This unexpected offer triggered intense debates within my family. I felt inclined to accept in order to satisfy my curiosity and reestablish connections to my roots. The thought of returning to a situation in which I would be surrounded by Germans, especially those of my generation, however, made me very uncomfortable. We debated endlessly the advantages and disadvantages of going. Finally, recognizing my need for closure to such a traumatic part of my life, Miriam encouraged me to accept the invitation and agreed to accompany me on this emotion-filled journey into my past.

In March, 1984, we took off for Berlin on a chartered flight sponsored by the government of Berlin. En route, we were accompanied by a gathering of other Holocaust survivors from all across the United States and Canada who had lived in Berlin prior to Hitler's rise to power. We were all making the same journey into our past. As we flew, we began to speak to our co-travelers. Our conversation initially focused on present-day life stories rather than past experiences. As time and miles passed, our defenses began to drop, and we began to share stories of our past. Suffering and inexplicable resilience echoed through each astounding episode.

Upon our arrival into Germany, we were met by a delegation of city officials led by a woman named Mrs. Wolf. A luxurious bus met us at the airport. We also were assured that plain-clothes security guards were protecting us as we left the airport for the Hotel Savoy in what was then West Berlin. After checking into the hotel, we had some time at leisure. Miriam and I decided to go for a walk. This was the first time in forty-eight years that I had set foot in the city which was my birthplace. I felt like a stranger walking down the once familiar streets, a displaced person amongst strangers. So much had changed. Without any desire to make personal contact with the German people, Miriam and I walked down the neighborhood streets, without venturing into any stores or speaking with any of the people. As we passed the train station near the Berlin Zoo, I

pointed to a money exchange kiosk; it was the same type of kiosk my father and his partners had owned in all the railroad stations in Berlin.

After returning to the Savoy, we were taken by chartered bus to a large, beautifully decorated meeting hall, where we were greeted by the *Oberbuergermeister* (Chief Mayor) of West Berlin, Senators, and other government officials. In their speeches, they expressed a desire to engage us in a dialogue about the past. They honestly and openly expressed their feelings of shame and sorrow about the tragedies that their parents and grandparents had caused for the Jewish people. The Holocaust, they admitted, cast a shadow of profound shame over Germany. I believed then, as I do now, that the feelings that our hosts expressed were sincere.

During our stay in Berlin, we were treated like royalty. We were wined, dined and entertained with an opera performance and a theater production. The opera was beautiful, but the theater production, "*Der Hauptman von Köepenick*," by Zuckmayer, at the Schiller Theater, was surprisingly offensive, despite its artistic excellence. In the play, a Jewish merchant sells a used Prussian Captain's uniform to a newly-released prisoner. The choice of a Jew as the seller of the merchandise and the particulars of the negotiation process indicated to us that anti-Semitic feelings persisted in Germany, in contrast to the views expressed in our hosts' speeches.

The following *Shabbat*, Miriam and I went to a nearby synagogue for services. We were not prepared for the security check that each person entering the Synagogue had to undergo. All bags were checked thoroughly. After services, we were invited to a luncheon in honor of a young couple who were to be married that same evening after *Shabbat*. In fact, our hosts insisted that we return to join them for their wedding ceremony. We happily accepted the invitation.

The wedding ceremony and subsequent celebration proved to be most interesting. The groom was born Jewish, while the bride, a Christian woman by birth, had converted to Judaism. The wedding blended two distinct families with diverse backgrounds. The groom was from a family of Polish survivors of the Holocaust while the bride's family consisted of German Christians. Yet despite their differences, these two people were able to fall in love and find happiness, and the families appeared to have made peace with each other. Music was provided by an Israeli band. What an interesting and unexpected glimpse into the complications of current-day Jewish life in Berlin!

The next Monday, at Miriam's suggestion, we decided to venture into East Berlin. She reasoned that since we were so close, we should use this opportunity to trace back family history and look into my parents' properties. In order to enter East Berlin, we had to clear through Checkpoint Charley, which we reached by

elevated train. Our documents were checked so thoroughly that we even had to remove our hats to make sure that we looked exactly like our pictures.

After crossing into East Berlin, we took a taxi and went to Weissensee Cemetery, considered the largest Jewish Cemetery in Europe. We were looking for the graves of my mother's mother and stepfather and her brother Joseph. At the office, surprisingly, we were provided with the exact location of the graves. As we walked through the area, however, we could see that the cemetery was in serious disrepair. Many gravestones were knocked over and grave sites were overgrown with weeds. When we arrived at the site described as my grandparents' graves, we could not verify that it was indeed theirs. The gravestones had been knocked over, and faced the ground, so that we could not see the inscriptions on them. Moreover, a tree had fallen across the toppled stones and was lying on top of them. We could not find my Uncle Joseph's grave at all. I was amazed at the contrast between the meticulous way the records were kept in the cemetery office and the shameless neglect of the grave sites.

After spending several hours there, we were nearly frozen, emotionally as well as physically. We returned to our waiting taxi and decided to track down an apartment in which I had lived as a very young child. I was stunned by the mutilated walls, pock-marked with the scars of bullets and shells. Whereas West

Berlin was marked by new concrete skyscrapers, here, throughout East Berlin, the imprint of the war remained clearly visible.

As we drove through the city, we were touched by what we saw. The mood in East Berlin was depressed: uniformed police were stationed at every intersection; facial expressions, even those of the children, were somber, clothes were drab and shabby. All of this created a marked contrast with the vitality and fashion consciousness we saw on the streets of West Berlin. After lunch at an elegant restaurant at *Unter Den Linden*, we decided to look for Papa's former business headquarters at *Behren Strasse* 27.

When we arrived at that address, we found a parking lot. The building had been destroyed during the War. The buildings on either side of Papa's, however, remained standing. Similarly, when we looked for the house in which I had lived most of my childhood, the once beautiful house on the once tree-lined street was not to be found. We soon learned that not only this house, but the entire street on which it sat had been decimated during the War. My dreams of showing Miriam this part of my past, this home where I had spent so many wonderful times, this home which I, and my family had left so abruptly late one night, so many years ago, were not to be fulfilled. Some places simply can never be revisited, but they linger in memory for better and for worse.

Epilogue

I cannot conclude this memoir without an account of friends and family members briefly mentioned earlier. This is my way of paying tribute to them.

My grandfather, Nathan Rath, died before 1930. My grandmother, Anna Rosner, died in the early 1940s in a nursing home in Berlin. Uncle Herman, Tanta Sabina and their children, Manfred and Sylvia, survived the Holocaust, and settled in Israel. Before ultimately reaching Palestine, they were interned by the British in a transit camp in Cyprus.

Uncle Erich died in a concentration camp. His wife Erna and their son Manfred survived. After the war they settled in Bucharest. *Tanta* Erna worked for the government as a pharmacist. Manfred and his wife Manya left Romania in 1979 and settled in Israel.

My father's two sisters, Rosa and Schrifa, and their families, perished in the Holocaust.

Fabian, Max and Sida Solomon left for Israel under the terms of a British quota in 1933. They were later joined by their parents, *Tanta* Netti and Uncle Yakov.

Freda Schwefel and her husband survived and settled in Israel.

The Rennerts, our family friends who visited with us several times a month, escaped to Israel. I learned, years later, that they were still living happily there.

After Hitler came to power in 1933, Uncle Adolph, my mother's brother, fell in love with a charming young woman named Lotte Sprintz. They became engaged. Lottie eventually received a visa to the United States, where she settled in Los Angeles. By then it was 1939. We were living in Czernowitz when we received a letter from Uncle Adolph that he had obtained his travel documents from Lotte to Tangier, where she would meet him. Just as he was ready to leave, however, the War broke out. It was too late. He was trapped in Germany and later, in 1941, was deported from Berlin to Lodz, Poland. He never returned. To this day, we don't know what happened to him, and we must assume that he was murdered.

My mother's brother-in-law, Herman Metzler, was picked up by the Gestapo in the early 1940's. His Christian upbringing did not save him, and he was never seen again. After his disappearance, *Tante* Ellen went into hiding with her two sons, Bodo and Richard. Several German families helped save their lives, providing them with false documents and a safe place to stay. They survived and came to the United States in the early 1950's, settling in Florida. *Tante* Ellen lived into her early 90's, passing away in 1989.

After Hitler came to power, my cousin Joseph Schmid, the opera singer, fled from Berlin to Belgium. He performed in twenty-four operas while he was there. When the German Army occupied Belgium, he fled to Switzerland. Without an official entry visa, he was interned in a Swiss Labor camp. With the assistance of the Simon Weisenthal Center, we recently learned that after Joseph was interned in the Labor Camp for a few days he complained of chest pain. The Commandant of the camp refused to let him receive any medical attention. He died of a heart attack in 1942 at the age of 38, another victim of the Holocaust.

In Czernowitz I had already learned of the fate of my dear friends Emil and Manya Klein. Emil was ordered to play the violin while interned in another stone quarry. As he played, the Germans shot and killed him and Manya.

My life has been a triumph over evil. My wife and children were the greatest reward for all of the years of agonizing pain. I feel compensated. The world does not owe me anything anymore. If I could have foreseen that this would be my destiny during the difficult years...but then I could not have afforded even the luxury of a dream so wonderful as this. With Miriam, I have created new generations to carry on our family and Jewish heritage.

I have attempted to paint with words a collage of pictures from my life. I consider this my prime obligation to my people, and I charge my children and

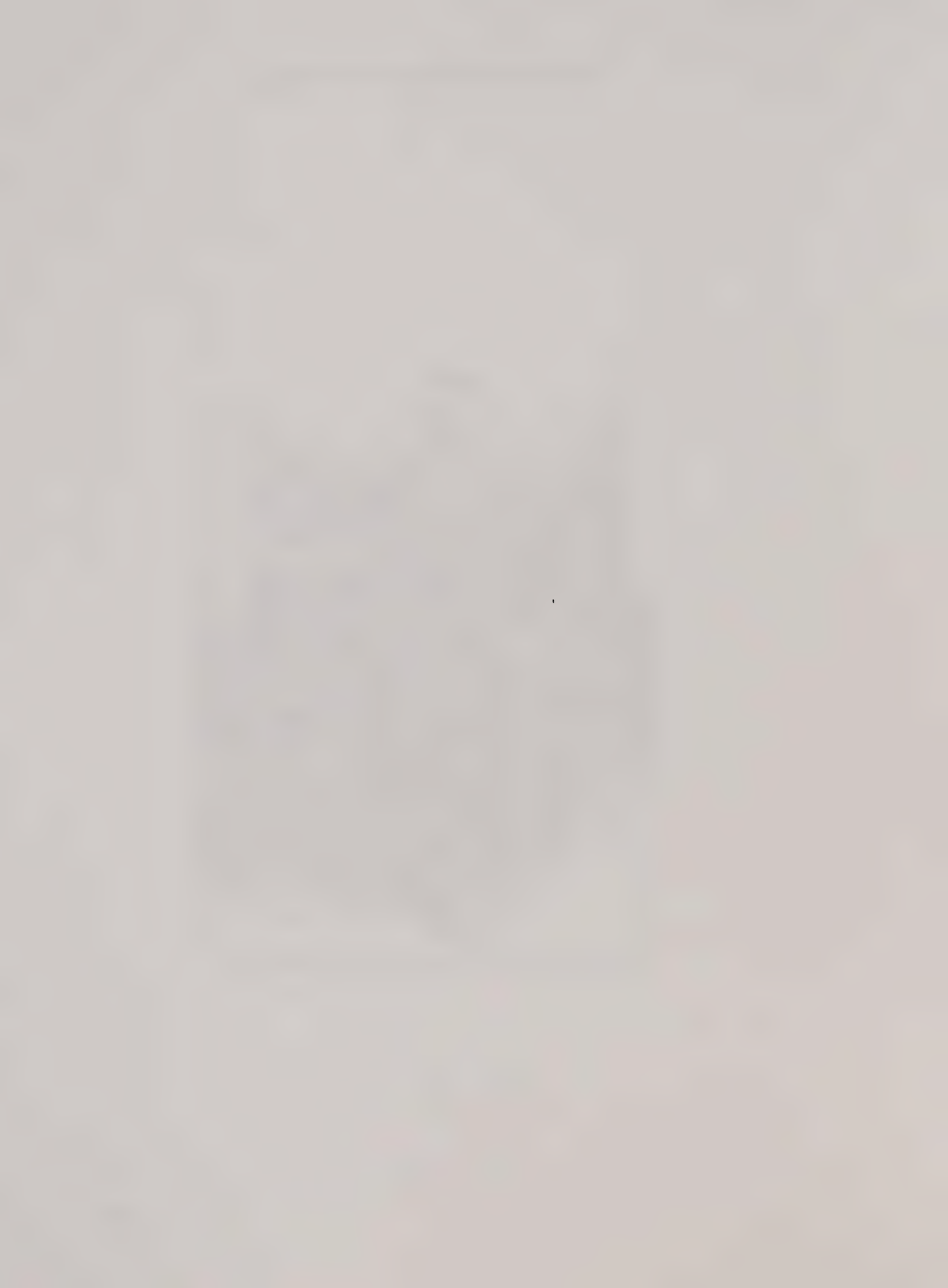
grandchildren with the responsibility of passing this knowledge and our traditional values on to future generations. I realize that I have been blessed. I hope that the blessings my father received from the *Shotzer Ruv* will continue to protect my family from one generation to the next...

Glossary

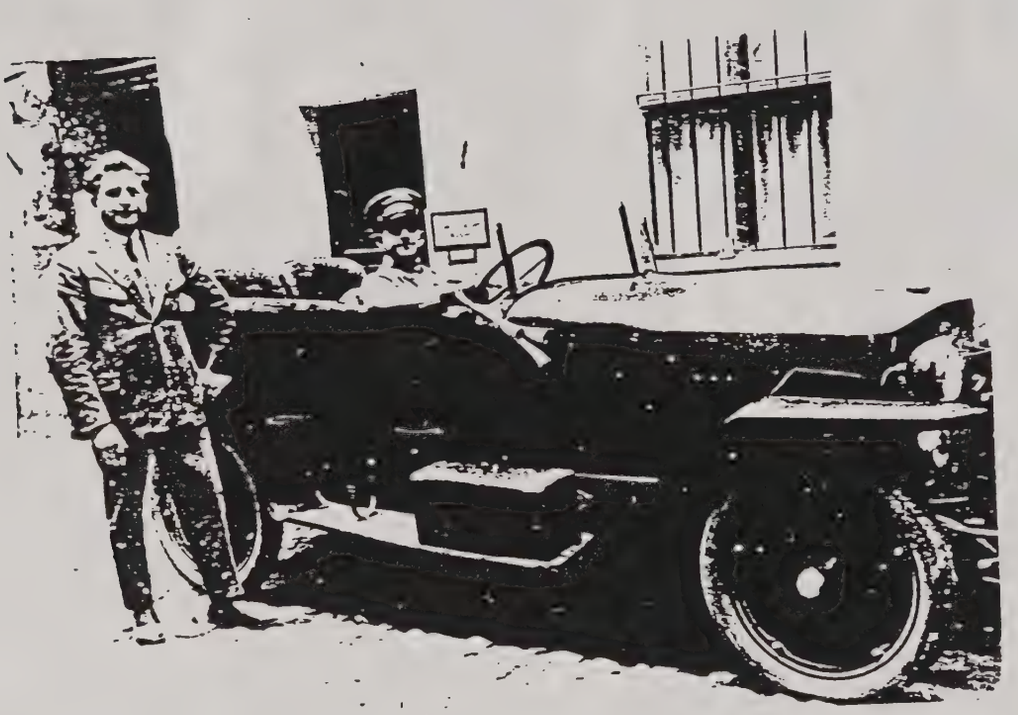
Term	Page	Definition
Alt-Neu Shul	16	Synagogue
Yeshiva	17	School of Advanced Jewish Studies
Bukovina	18	Province of Romania
Transylvania	18	Province of Romania
Tikun Olam	19	Repairing the world through the performance of good deeds
Erev Pesach	19	The evening of the first Passover seder
Kiddush	23	Ritual blessing of the wine on Sabbath and Holidays
Motzi	23	Ritual blessing of the bread
Shotzer Ruv	28	Rabbinical Authority
Rebbetzin	28	Wife of the Ruv
Czernowitz	36	Capital of the Bukovina

Photographs

Page	Description
162	Mordechi Wagner, son of Chiam Wagner, the Shotzer Ruv
163	Left- Papa's father, Menashe Wagner Right- Papa's mother, Chana, with two of her children, Rose and Shifra
164	Top left- Erich Wagner (oldest son) Top right- Papa (Osias Wagner) Bottom left- Herman Wagner Bottom right- Menachem Mendle Wagner
165	My parents in front of one of several stores which Papa owned (early 1930s)
166	Papa with his car and chauffer (top) and with company delivery vehicle
167	Top left- Mama (age unknown) Top right- Mama (age 24) Bottom left- Papa (age 33) Bottom right- Mama (age 30)
168	Top- Papa's Bar Mitzvah Center- Mama and Papa in Czernovitz in 1939 (Papa, age 52,Mama age 42) Document from the Berlin Police (1926)
169	Top- Nathan Rath (my grandfather) Bottom, from left- Uncle Adolph, Uncle Joseph, Tante Ellen
170	Elementary school photo of Ingeborg (top row, third from right)
171	Top- Summer 1924, from right- Marcel (age 12), , me (age 8), Inge (age 5) Jacques (age 10) Bottom left- Marcel (age 6) with governess Bottom right- With governess, 1921, from right- me (age 5), Inge (age 2), Jacques (age 7) and Marcel (age 9)
172	Marcel (top left) as a member of the Master Class of Professor Frederic Lamond
173	Top left- Marcel (age 26) Top right- Jacques in Romania (age 22) Bottom left- me (age 24) Bottom right- Inge (age 34)
174	Papa (age 35)
175	Top- Mama (age 43) and Papa (age 52) in Czernovitz Bottom- Mama (age 68) and Papa (age 77) at our home
176	Top- me (age 30) Bottom- me (age 22)
177	Top- At work in Munich at the American Joint Distribution Committee Bottom- Leaving Munich to go to Bremen, on our way to America



Cigarren, Cigaretten
EN GROS ET EN DETAIL
Tabak
Cigarren
Cigaretten
Tabak
Cigarren
Handl
Niederlage
Handler
Fernsprecher



Tabakwaren
Grosshandel
O. WAGNER
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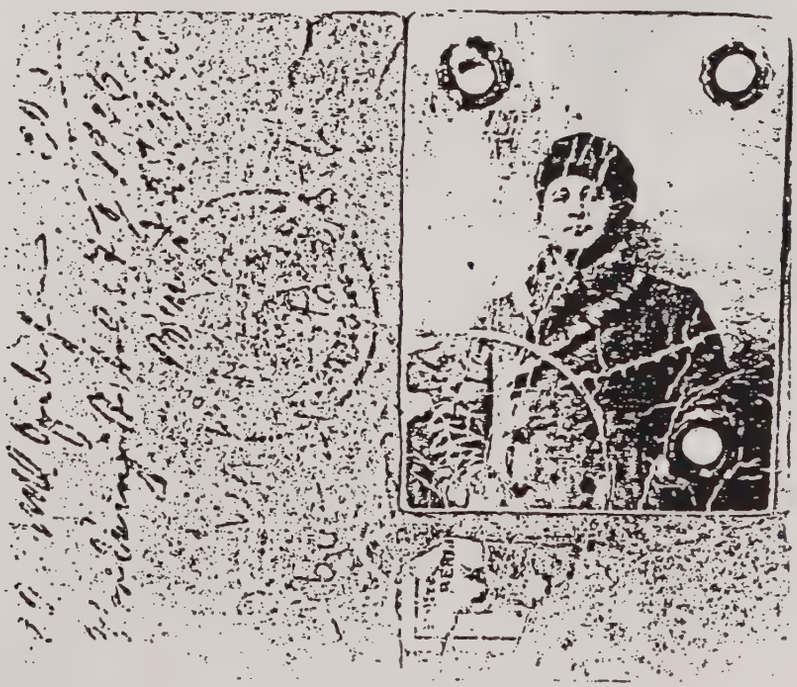
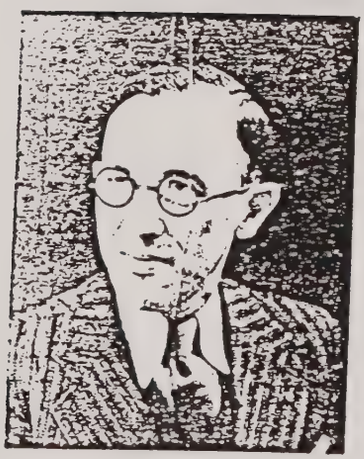
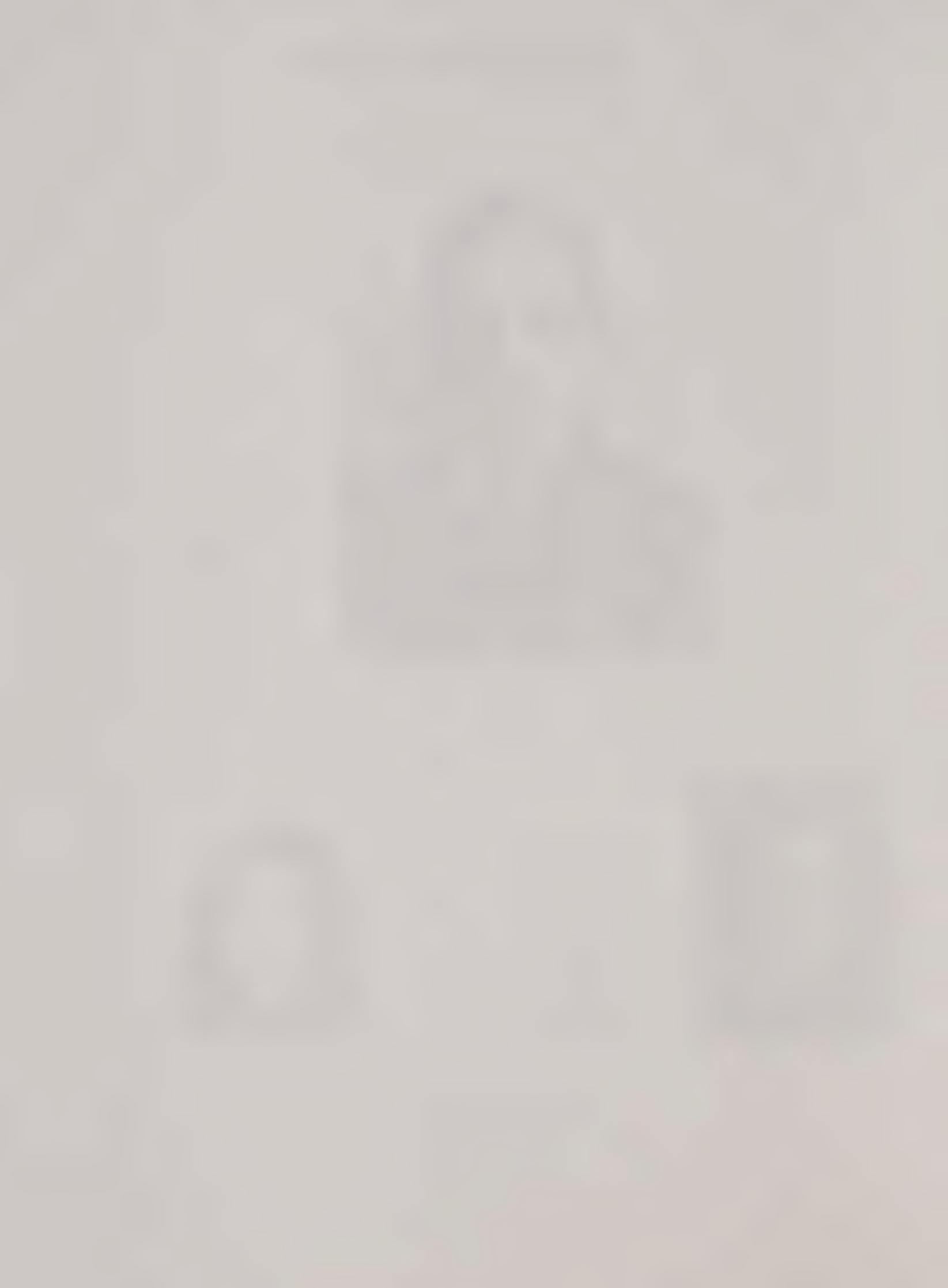
BERLIN W. 6
Behrenstr. 22







BUHR & HEISE

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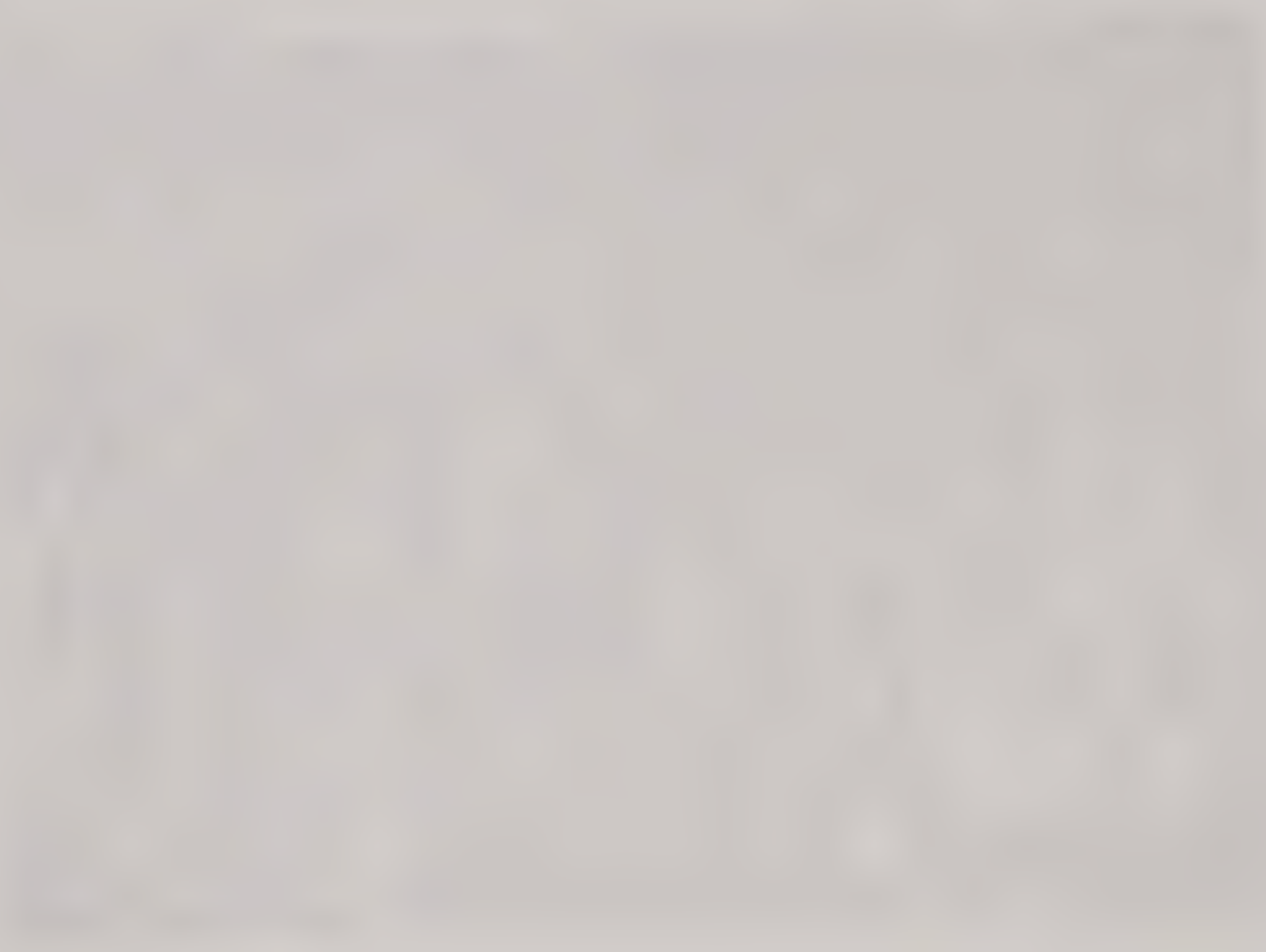
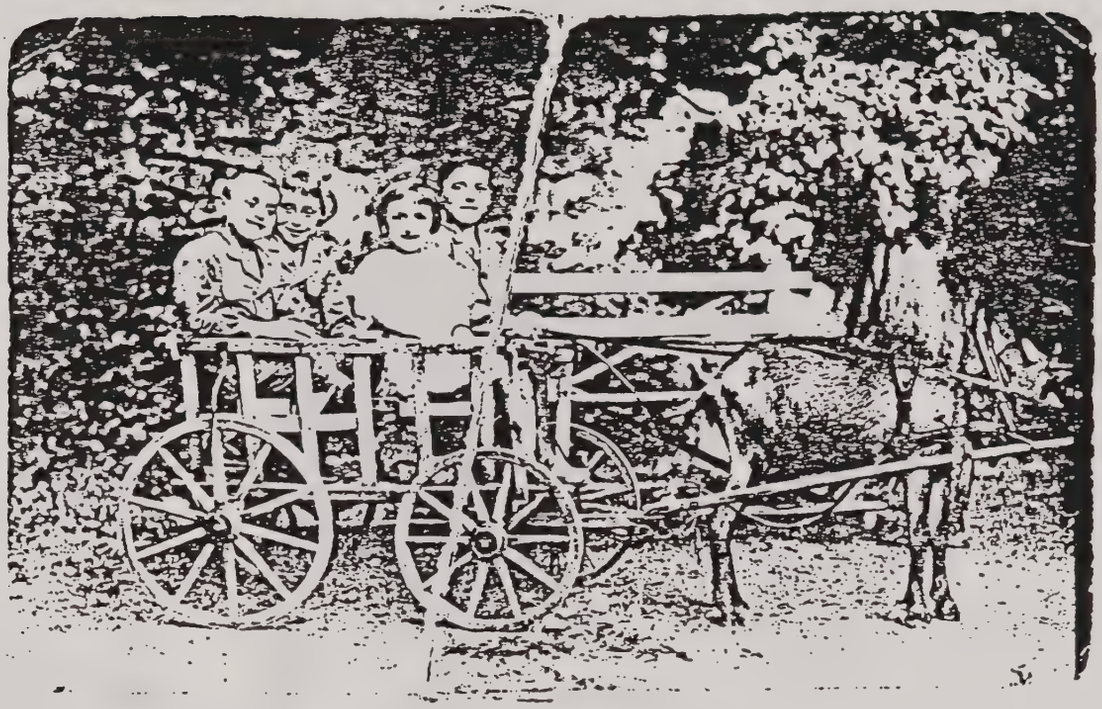
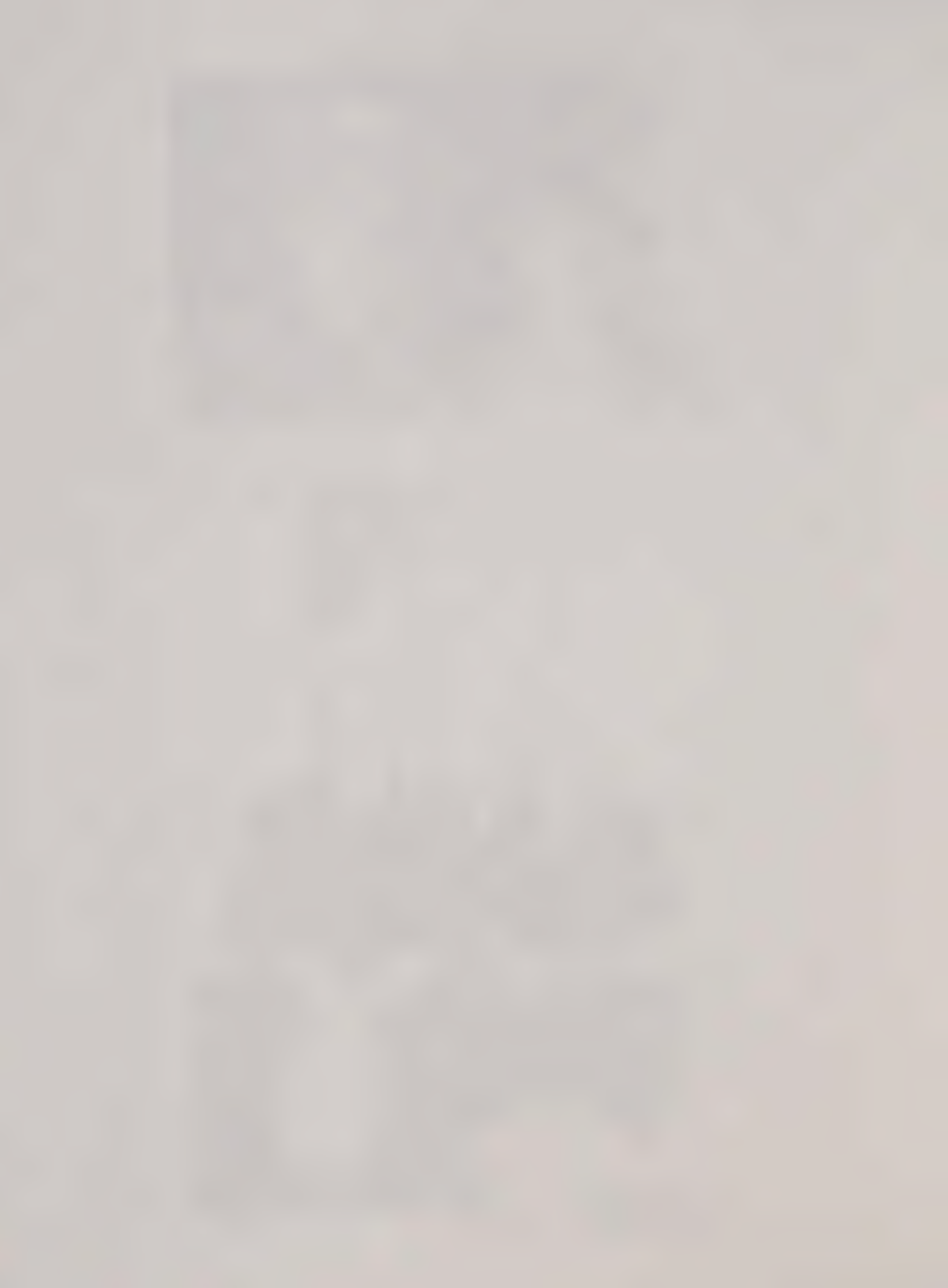
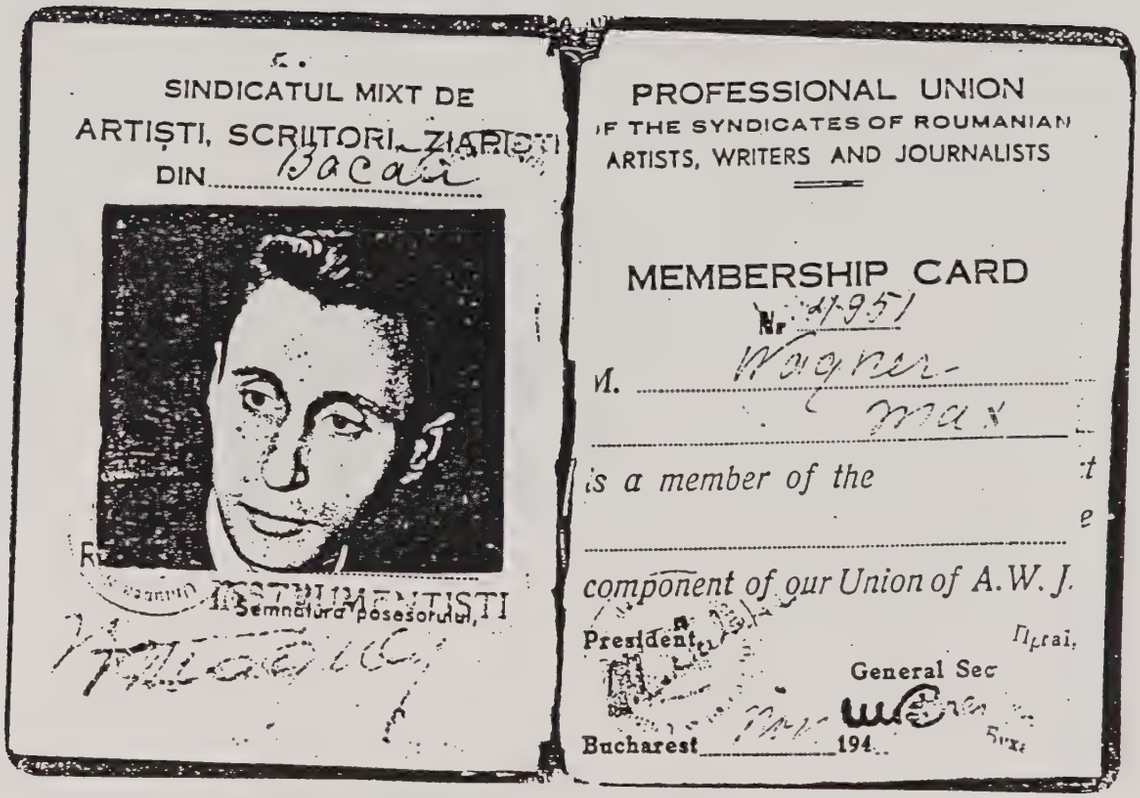
F6 Baerwald 8869 vorm.
F6 Baerwald 7277 nachm.







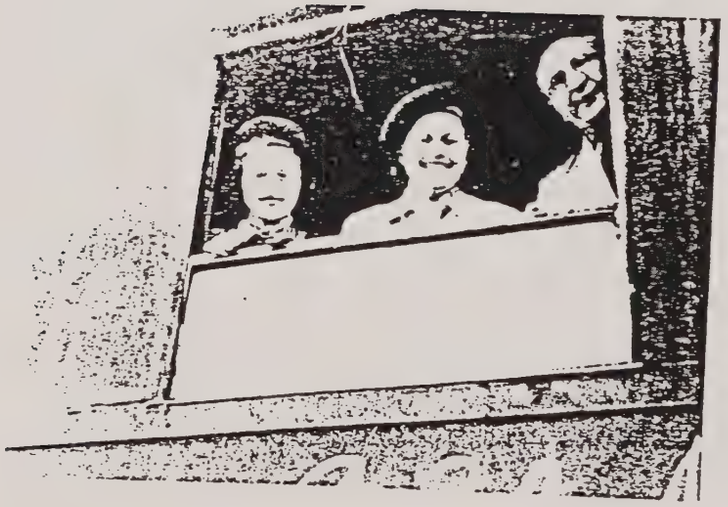


SINDICATUL MIXT DE
ARTIȘTI, SCRIITORI, ZIARIȘTI
DIN Bacau

INSTRUMENTISTI
Semnătura posesorului,

PROFESSIONAL UNION
OF THE SYNDICATES OF ROUMANIAN
ARTISTS, WRITERS AND JOURNALISTS

MEMBERSHIP CARD
Nr. 4951
M. Wagner-
Max
is a member of the
component of our Union of A.W.J.
President
General Sec
Bucharest 194..



Documents

Page	Description
179	Official notification of departure date for the United States
180	Proof of detention in Moghlieu
181	Proof of professor position in violin in Bacau, Romania
182	Letter of recognition for performance in a concert in Buhusi, Romania, under the auspices of the Russian-Romanian Cultural Organization
183	Receipt for a contribution of DM 25 000 (German Marks) to the Jewish Community in Berlin

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Emigration Service

Ismaninger Straße 57
MUNICH.

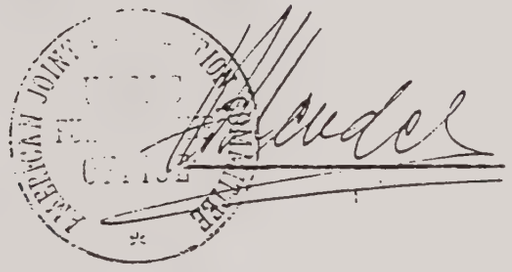
Telefon 48 17 61 8

April 22nd.49.

From the desk of: *Gladys Roth*
To:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to certify that Mr. WAGNER Usias
" Sali
" Max
" Ingeburg
are leaving for USA via Bremen on April 26th.49.



Autorizație

Evreul Vagner Marcel, profesor de muzică, cu 5 (cinci) persoane din familia Sa, oprit în orașul Moghilev pentru unele obligațiuni, la o fabrică de armament, până la noi dispoziții.

Moghilev 10 Noembrie 1941

Prefect al Jud. Moghilev
p. Indiscifrabil

Conform cu originalul
Dupon Trans. al Prefecturei Bacău
9/I 946

N:270

CONSILIUL INTERSCOLAR
al
JUDEŢULUI B A C A U
-.-.-.-.-.-

Nr. 711
1945 Noemvrie 18

3177/14.10.47
Preşedinţia Consiliului Interscolar Bacău
pentru confirmarea traducerii

Domnului

Director al Şcoalei de Muzică
L O C O

Avem onoare a vă face cunoscut că Dl.Inspector şcolar MIHAI POPOVICI, a aprobat ca în anul şcolar 1944/45 să funcţioneze la ~~xxxxx~~ şcoala Dvs următorul personal didactic:

1.- JEAN KOFFLER ✓ Director, Profesor de pian.-
2.- MAX WAGNER ✓ Profesor de Vioară.- 4
3.- ANETA HERSCOVICI ✓ Profesoară de Vioară.-
4.- IGOR DUBININ — Profesor de Gimnastică ritmică 4
5.- KLAWDIA FILIPOVA — Profesoară de pian 4
6.- HAIM JANCOVICI ✓ Maestru de Vioară.-
7.- MIHAIL DUMITRU — Maestru Instrumente de suflat 4
8.- AIZIC JANCOVICI ✓ Suplinitor Acordeon.- 4
9.- SOLO BLUMENFELD ✓ Suplinitor Vioară ✓
10.- JULIA ~~FILIPOVA~~ Cumchina — Profesoară de Pian.- ✓

Vă rugăm să binevoiţi a vă conforma.-

PREŞEDINTELE CONSILIULUI INTERSCOLAR,
D I R E C T O R,

Secretar,

Fi[illegible]

No. [illegible]

Anul 1945 *Luna* Iunie *Ziua* 17.-

Filiala A.R.L.U.S. Buhuşi, mulţumeşte D-lui Profesor Wagner Max violonist, absolvent al Academiei de Muzică din Berlin, pentru felul cum a executat bucăţile muzicale ale compozitorilor clasici şi sovietici, cu ocazia concertului dat în ziua de 27 Maiu 1945 în oraşul Buhuşi.

Execuţia bucăţilor, a încântat asistenţa, care în repetate rânduri l'au aplaudat şi rechemat la rampă.-

Talentul Dlui.Profesor Wagner Max va contribui mult la ridicarea nivelului artistic al tuturor celor ce-l vor asculta.-

Îl recomandăm cu toată dragostea.-

PREŞEDINTE,
Ing.
S.Rădulescu,

SECRETAR,
Prof,
D.Tipa.

ASOC. ROMÂNĂ PENTRU STRÂNGEREA LEGĂTURILOR CU STATELE UNITE ALE AMERICII
A.R.L.U.S.
FILIALA
BUHUŞI

Vorstand Jüdische Gemeinde
zu Berlin.

Tagebuch-Nr. 2935/22. III.

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bei Beantwortung dieses Schreibens anzugeben.

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